

A full-page photograph of Taylor Swift is the background for the magazine cover. She is sitting on a light-colored surface, leaning forward with her hands near her face, looking directly at the camera. She has long, wavy blonde hair with bangs and is wearing a dark blue or black button-down shirt over a white top, and a mustard-colored skirt. The Rolling Stone logo is at the top in its signature red and black font.

Rolling Stone

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Mitt Romney's Mormon Ghosts

By Mikal Gilmore

Led Zeppelin's Last Waltz

ROD STEWART'S WILD MEMOIRS

Lennon's Lost Letters

THE 2012
HOT LIST

Taylor Swift

THE HEART BREAK KID



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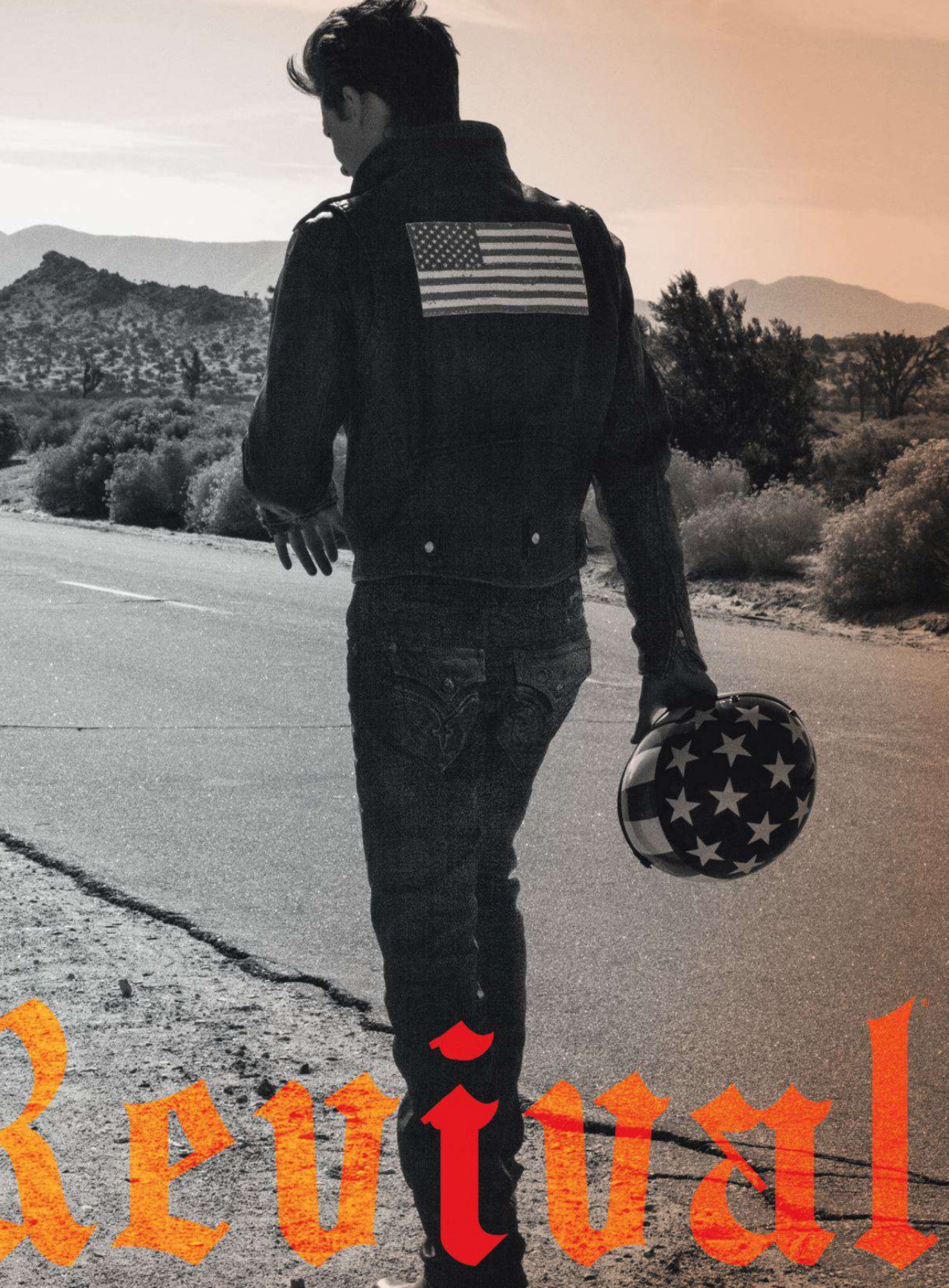
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GOOD-TIME GUY
Rod Stewart, riding
in style to a football
match, in 1974

SPECIAL SECTION

The Hot List 2012

What's new, next and just plain smokin' – the latest Bond Girl, the death of the worry-free blow job, Kanye's favorite beatmaking team, Emma Watson's queer, weed-toking co-star and much more. **Page 41**

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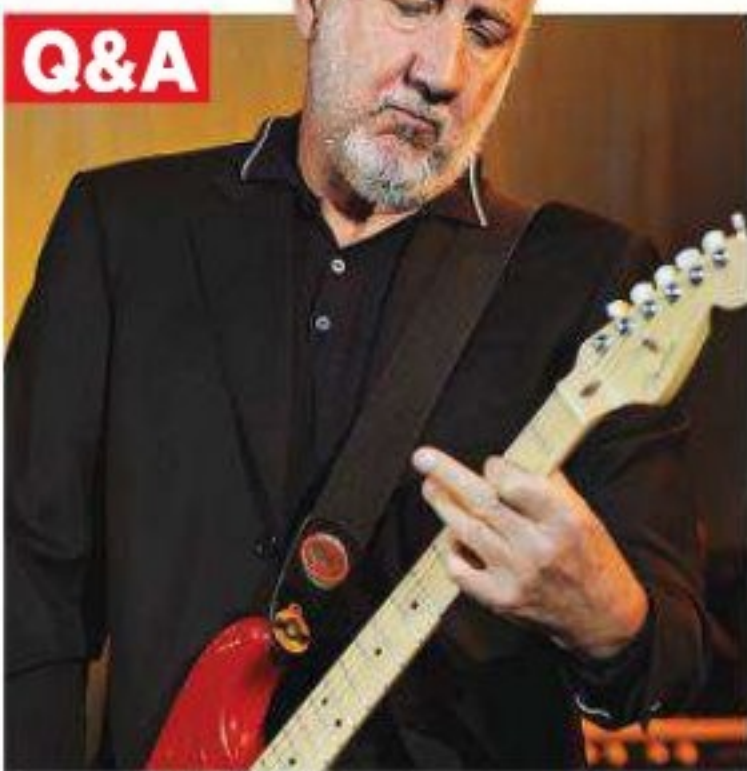
Ben Affleck's thriller about Americans escaping Iran.

ON THE COVER Taylor Swift photographed at Drive In Studios, New York, on August 31st, 2012, by **Theo Wenner**.

Styling by Karen Langley at Total Management. Hair by Didier Malige at Art Partner. Makeup by Aaron De Mey at Art Partner. Manicure by Naomi Yasuda at Creative Management NYC. Jacket from What Goes Around Comes Around, tank top by Cheap Monday.

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Q&A



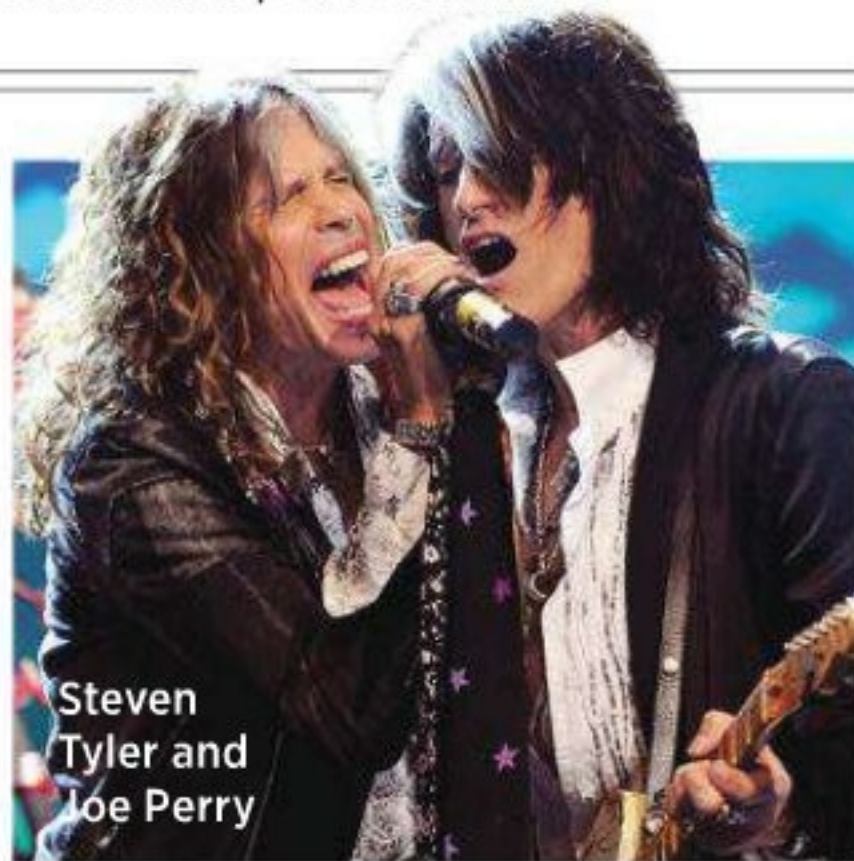
PETE TOWNSHEND

The Who guitarist looks back at five decades of rock & roll and talks about his new memoir with ROLLING STONE editor and publisher Jann S. Wenner. Visit rollingstone.com for highlights – and video of a special Townshend performance.

ALBUM PREMIERE

AEROSMITH ENTER NEW 'DIMENSION'

Exclusive: Aerosmith debut one song a day from their new *Music From Another Dimension!* Plus: track-by-track commentary from the band.



Steven Tyler and Joe Perry

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A POCKET GUIDE TO REPUBLICAN ROCKERS

The few, the proud, the right-wing dudes with guitars: An exhaustive search by ROLLING STONE finds the rockers who actually cop to voting conservative, from Kid Rock to Ted Nugent.

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Remember Brad Pitt before he started chasing Oscars and adopting kids, when he was a total himbo? We track his early years, from *Thelma and Louise* on.



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Lady Gaga, Bruce Springsteen, Dave Grohl

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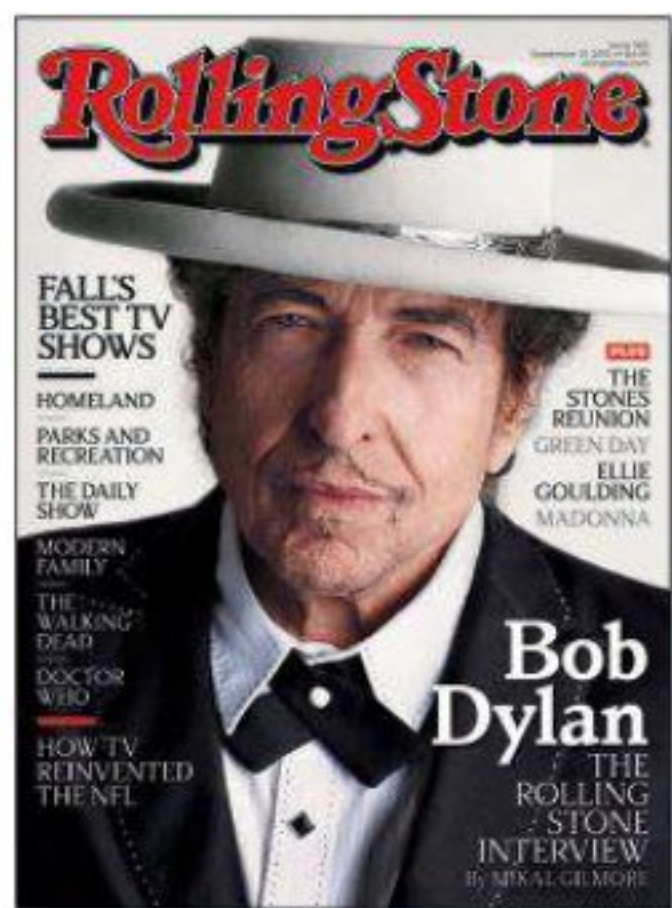
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LOVE LETTERS
& ADVICE



Master of War

BOB DYLAN IS A MASTER OF art and deception ["Bob Dylan: The ROLLING STONE Interview," RS 1166]. On the one hand, he's an impossible interview; on the other, he's the most fascinating enigma alive today. Mikal Gilmore provides not so much an interview as a battle. Thank you, RS, for covering the whole bloody scene.

Paul Lyons, Los Angeles

I LOVED THE DYLAN COVER story. Gilmore reached through the smoke, fog and drama of the media image and brought out the human Bob Dylan.

*Adrian Maui Sclawy
Annapolis, MD*

IT'S AMAZING THAT GILMORE didn't walk out of the interview. Dylan did not answer one question without cloaking himself as some mystical, enigmatic philosopher, and even tells Gilmore he's "asking questions to a person who's long dead." That response explains a whole lot about Dylan.

A.L. Mason, via the Internet

DON'T EXPECT THE JOKER-man to fess up. The last laugh belongs to he.

Erskine Carter, Rock Island, IL

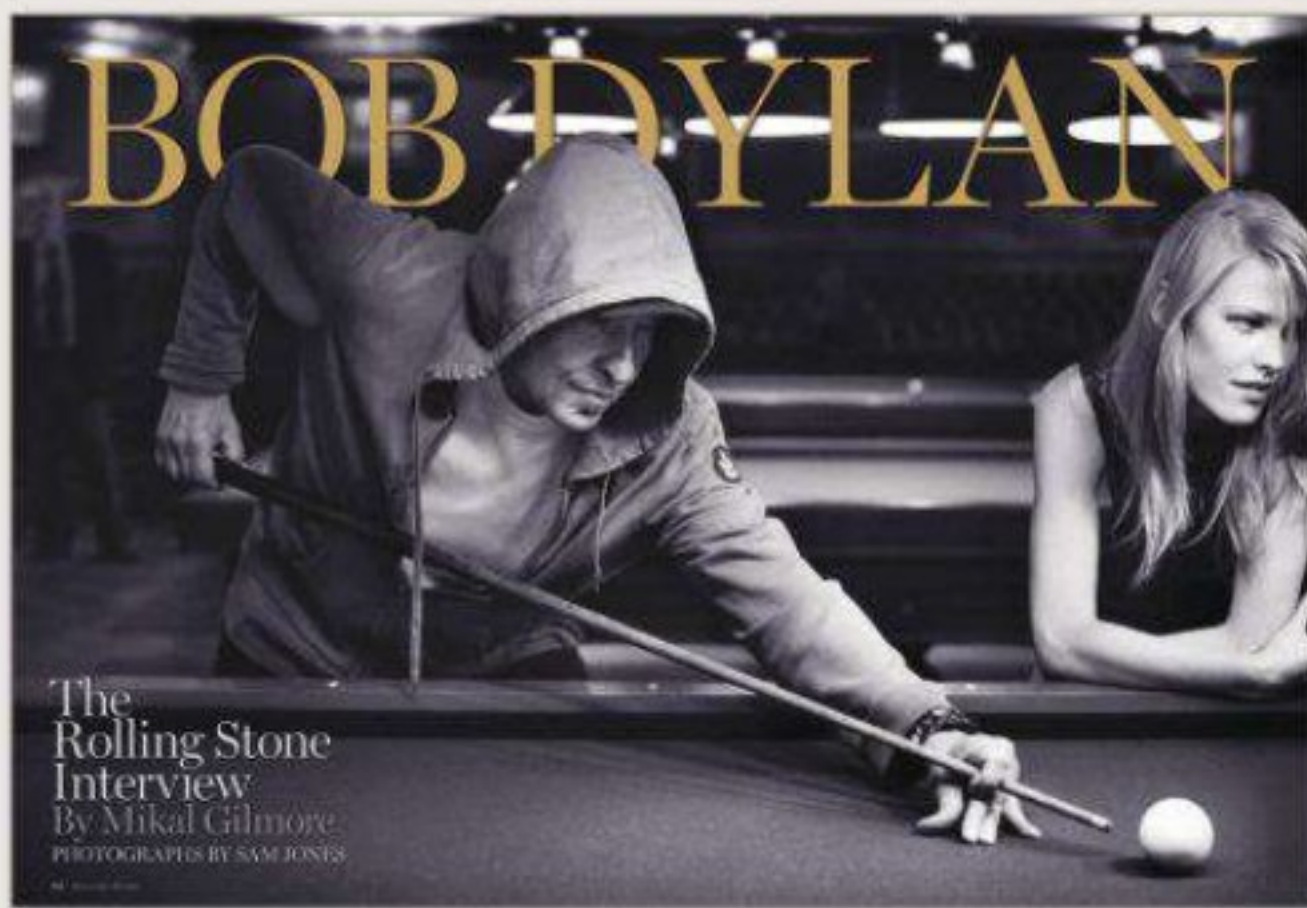
AS A LONGTIME FAN OF BOTH Dylan and Gilmore, I look forward to anything either chooses to do. But I have to admit, I'm not entirely con-

Bob Dylan Unleashed

MIKAL GILMORE'S SWEEPING interview with Bob Dylan generated praise, confusion and endless parsing of the man's words [RS 1166]. Over at *Grantland*, Chuck Klosterman was blown away, calling the piece "an amazing, insightful interview with Bob Dylan – one of the best I've ever read. Many of the quotes are unworldly."

He adds, "The last line of the introduction claims, 'This is Bob Dylan as you've never known him before,' which struck me as kind of hack and almost certainly false. But the claim is true: This interview is crazy."

Others were equally blown away by the feisty exchange. Columnist Liz Smith marveled at Dylan's enduring mystique: "The man is still a fascinating, confounding read." Another critic commented that Dylan's new record lacks the same inspired fury as his ROLLING STONE conversation. Writing in *The New Republic*, music historian David Hajdu lamented, "Unfortunately, Dylan's new album has nothing so fiery as his interview comments about wussies and pussies and motherfuckers rotting in hell."



vinced Dylan was not just messing with us in this latest interview. Maybe we deserve it.

*Patrick Geraghty
New Port Richey, FL*

SAME OLD DYLAN, REJECTING his past, pushing back when topics get tough – and the part about a performer not feeling emotion? Try telling that to Springsteen or Jagger.

*Chick DeCicco
Hammonton, NJ*

GILMORE, YOU POOR BASTARD. You should have had the bloody mary.

R. Morrill, Boscawen, NH

Climate Hell

IN JEFF GOODELL'S TERRIFIC piece ["Romney's Energy Plan," RS 1166], Mitt mocks Obama's limited efforts to address global warming while he embraces environmental catastrophe as a trade-off for our becoming an "energy superpower." I hope voters see how dangerous a Romney administration would be to the planet.

Frank Marlin, via the Internet

America's Game

FOOTBALL IS THE BIGGEST thing on television ["More

Show Than Game," RS 1166], but little concern is shown for the athletes who sustain concussions on the field. Learning about the effects of these devastating injuries has made it almost impossible for me to watch this violent sport.

Barbara Buedel, Glendale, AZ

DAVID AMSDEN'S NFL STORY was very good. I enjoyed the look behind the scenes of producing the NFL broadcasts. But I thought there was one glaring omission about TV's influence on the evolution of the game: the advent of coach's-challenge/booth-review rules – a direct result of instant replays combined with the proliferation of those HD cameras. Without them, the system never would've been adopted.

Ed Milne, East Syracuse, NY

Badass Bundy

I'VE LOVED ED O'NEILL since *Married...With Children*, and it was great to read about his crazy past [Fall TV, RS 1166]. The Mob? The Steelers? Who the hell knew Al Bundy was a black belt!

Mary Clarke, via the Internet

Taibbi's Wrath

IN TRYING TO DEDUCE WHY anyone would vote for Romney, Matt Taibbi captures my thoughts when he writes, "Maybe it's a sexual thing... like those people who get off having someone shit on their heads" ["Who's the Boss?" RS 1166]. An incredibly damning article. Matt would make a great executioner. Grab your ax, sir!

Scott Clements, via the Internet

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THE **PL** **LIST** OUR FAVORITE SONGS, ALBUMS AND VIDEOS RIGHT NOW

1. Ke\$ha

"Die Young"

Our girl K's latest single is a devastating indictment of the Romney-Ryan tax plan. Just kidding! It's a Dr. Luke-produced glitter bomb, co-written by the guy from the band fun. "That magic in your pants/It's making me blush," Ke\$ha shouts. Word. Don't ever change, girl.



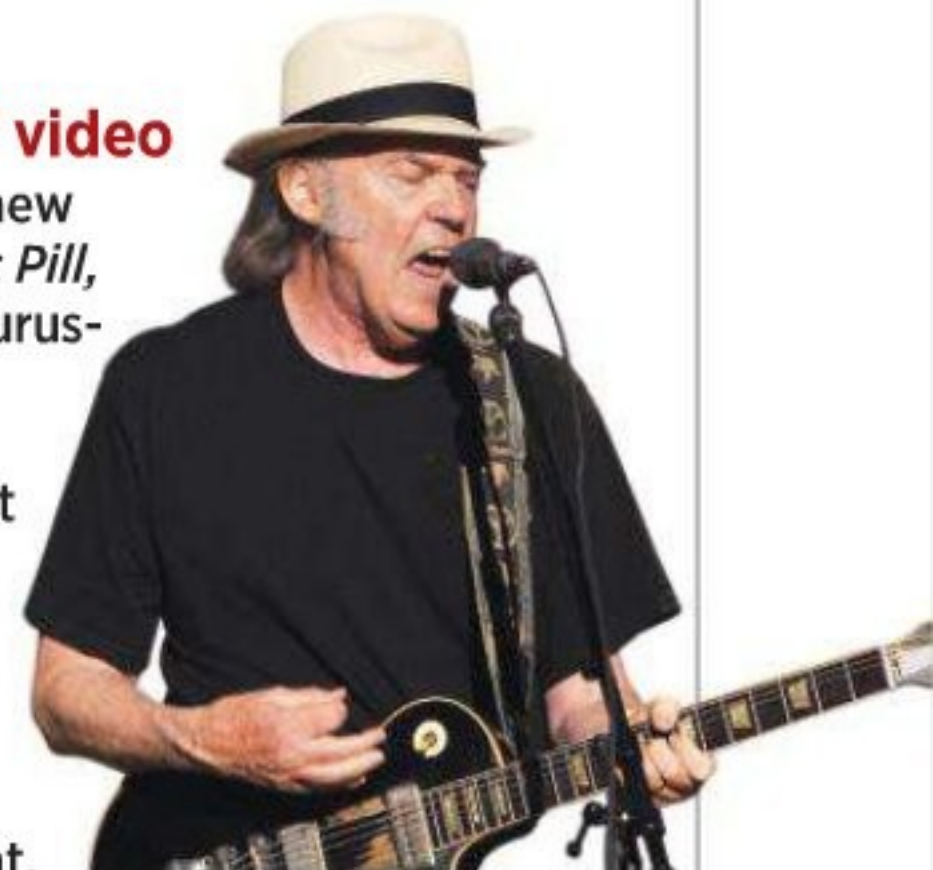
2. The Killers "Flesh and Bone"

The hooks are enormous, and so is the band's sense of self-importance. Yep, it's a Killers song! Which is actually an awesome thing – the world needs arena-scale fist-pumpers.



3. Neil Young "Walk Like a Giant" video

Neil and Crazy Horse's new double disc, *Psychedelic Pill*, is packed with brontosaurus-size garage jams. The vaporizer-ready clip for this fuzzed-out highlight splices archival footage of mushroom clouds, Albert Einstein and Bigfoot with kaleidoscope visuals. Crank it and see the light.



4. Big Boi "Mama Told Me"

The OutKast MC teams up with Destiny's Child alum Kelly Rowland on this Prince-y preview of his sure-to-be-awesome new album (due out November 13th).



5. Hospitality "Monkey"

On the New York indie-pop act's new single, singer Amber Papini delivers wry commentary over golden guitar chimes. It's the perfect follow-up to the sharply observed sketches of city life on Hospitality's recent debut LP.

7. Soundgarden "Been Away Too Long"

The chorus (and title) of the OG grunge scientists' new riff monster says it all: When you hear frontman Chris Cornell's brutal wail crashing into guitarist Kim Thayil's fretboard fireworks, you'll wonder how we got by without a new disc from these guys since '96.

6. Mumford & Sons Babel

The U.K. folk-rock crew turns everything all the way up on the year's biggest-debuting LP: louder howl-along choruses, banjo-ier banjo breakdowns, tearier lost-soul lyrics. Cold-play, maybe it's time to buy a fiddle or three? Just sayin'.

8. Solange "Losing You" video

Beyoncé's indie-rock-loving little sister journeyed all the way to South Africa to shoot the dreamy, visually striking clip for this wistful pop tune, in which she gets down with the locals and rocks some seriously fly designer outfits.



BREAKING, FALLING HAIR?

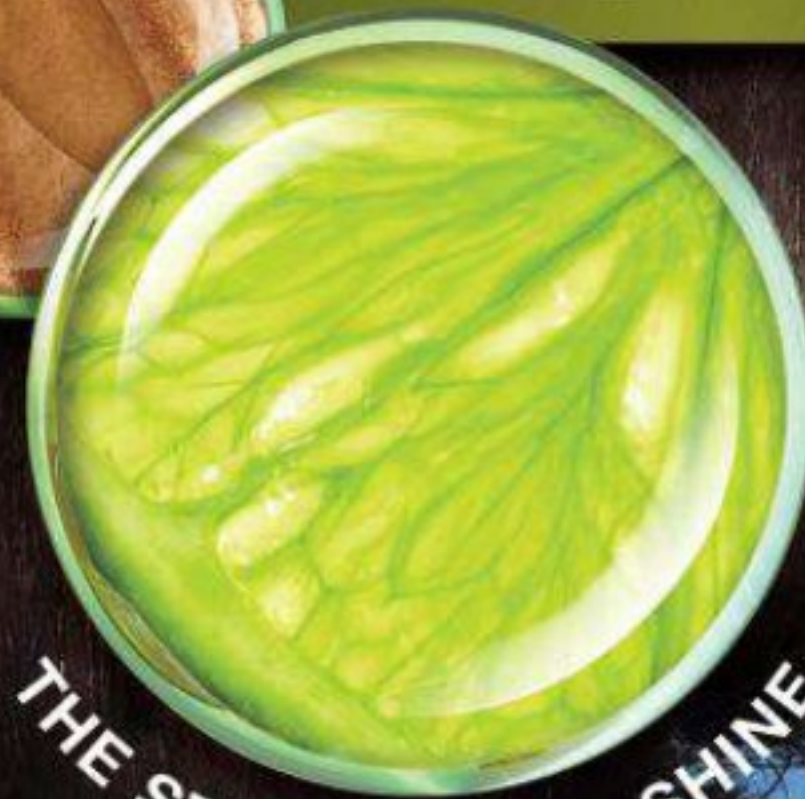
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GOOD KARMIN



RollingStone
Women Who Rock
presented by GARNIER
FRUCTIS

YOU WATCHED WITH ANTICIPATION

AS POP DUO KARMIN DUKED IT OUT WITH 5 OTHER TOP FEMALE ARTISTS IN THIS YEAR'S WOMEN WHO ROCK CONTEST. THREE MONTHS AND OVER 850,000 VOTES LATER, AMY HEIDEMAN AND NICK NOONAN PROVED THEY HAD THE STRENGTH TO OUT-SHINE THE COMPETITION AND TOOK THE CROWN. HERE'S A LOOK AT THEIR JOURNEY INTO THE SPOTLIGHT AND ONTO THE COVER OF ROLLING STONE.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KENNEDY

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the SHINING MOMENTS

ROLLING STONE and Garnier Fructis introduced the world to the 2012 Women Who Rock contest in June, giving way to hot debate in social media this Summer. As fans campaigned and online votes were cast, Karmin became an early favorite, holding a strong lead throughout the competition.

In August, during the biggest music weekend in Chicago, Karmin literally moved the crowd *inside* at Garnier Fructis and ROLLING STONE's Women Who Rock contest. Amy and Nick rocked the Paris Studio stage to a packed house of over 2000 fans—proving they had what it takes to secure the win and be featured in ROLLING STONE.

Now coined “Karminites,” the duo credits the fans for their success: “We’re over the moon about winning ROLLING STONE’s ‘Women Who Rock’ Contest,” said Karmin’s Amy Heidemann. Nick Noonan added, “It’s such a huge honor to be on the flip cover of this special issue and it wouldn’t have happened without our fans. We are beyond thankful to them!”

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OH, HELLO

Women Who Rock finalists battled on stage at Rolling Stone's Rock Room. Crowd favorite Amy was fearless and confident when they performed their smash hit “Hello”.



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Rock & Roll



Led Zeppelin's Last Waltz

Band opens up about the new film documenting its 2007 reunion By David Fricke

AT ONE POINT IN "CELEBRATION Day," the new film of Led Zeppelin's 2007 reunion concert in London, the camera stays long and tight on Jimmy Page's hands as they execute the introduction to "Stairway to Heaven" on the six-string neck of his double-neck Gibson guitar. It is one of rock's most iconic riffs, played in full and close-up

RAMBLE ON
Plant and Page
onstage in 2007.

ROSS HALEFIN

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by the composer, at one of his band's greatest and most important shows.

"With Led Zeppelin, it has always been that mystique of how the music is done – how it works, why it works," Page says on the phone from London a couple of weeks before *Celebration Day*'s worldwide theatrical premiere on October 17th. "The closer you can get in on that and the more lingering it is, the better."

Celebration Day, which will be commercially released in various audio and visual formats on November 19th, is nothing more or less than Zeppelin's entire two-hour performance on December 10th, 2007, at London's O2 Arena. The concert, a benefit and tribute to the late Atlantic Records chief Ahmet Ertegun, was the first full Zeppelin show by Page, singer Robert Plant and bassist John Paul Jones since the death of drummer John Bonham

Page recalls walking offstage after the reunion concert feeling "really high. That's the truth. It was a serious test, and we passed it, all of us. And we had an extraordinary communion on the stage. That's alive and well when you see it." But it was quite a while – Page can't remember how long – before he saw a rough cut of Carruthers' footage ("We didn't rush into the editing suite to have it out for Christmas").

In fact, Plant and Jones viewed that cut first. "We came away raving," Jones says. "It was very fitting to the experience. We called Jimmy and said, 'You've gotta see this.'"

"The thing about Led Zeppelin was that it was always four musicians at the top of their game, but they could play like a band," Page says. "Even in the first couple of rehearsal days, running up to the O2, we were playing pretty good. But we

really wanted to shine as a band." He cites the set list's opening sequence – from the surprise opener, "Good Times Bad Times," from 1969's *Led Zeppelin*, into "Ramble On" and the tortuous crunch of "Black Dog." "I wanted people to feel, 'They're taking this seriously.'"

"And I have to tell you, the rehearsals were all quite different," Page says, "so much in that Zeppelin spirit and character." To prove it, a deluxe edition of the DVD will include footage from the band's only full-scale production rehearsal before the O2 concert. "You get the ur-

gency of that night, but also the determination that was in rehearsal."

Inevitably, *Celebration Day* has set off more reunion talk. At a London press conference announcing the film, Plant raved about the O2 performance: "To get back in the middle of that music was a spectacular experience." But he and Page evaded questions about additional shows. When asked if the movie marks the end of Zeppelin, once and for all, Jones – who is busy writing an opera and collaborating with Robyn Hitchcock and the Norwegian group Supersilent – responds, "When I move house, I never look back at the house and go, 'Oh, that's the last moment I'll see there.' I always move forward."

"That's a good answer," Page says, laughing. But he is more direct. "I think if there had been any more concerts to be done, we'd already be talking about them. So I don't see it." *Celebration Day*, he adds, "is a testament to what we did in 2007. There it is."



DANCING DAYS

"The thing about Led Zeppelin is it was always four musicians on top of their game," says Page.

in 1980. Bonham's son, Jason, took his father's place for the night, which is shown without backstage footage and includes minimal shots of the ecstatic audience. Instead, director Dick Carruthers – who shot the concert with more than a dozen cameras – provides extended close-ups of the band members in action: Plant in blues-trance moan during "Since I've Been Loving You"; Jones threading the folk-rock gallop of "Ramble On" with low-end countermelodies; everyone turning to Jason in admiration during his volcanic solo at the end of "Rock and Roll."

Celebration Day is "almost like being onstage with us," Jones says. "We always had that interaction," he adds, referring to Zeppelin's legendary concert prowess in the Seventies. "But nobody could see it, because the lighting wasn't there." Before the O2 show, Jones notes, "I remember Dick saying in one of the early meetings, 'I'm going to need 14 cameras.' Everybody went, 'What?' It paid off."



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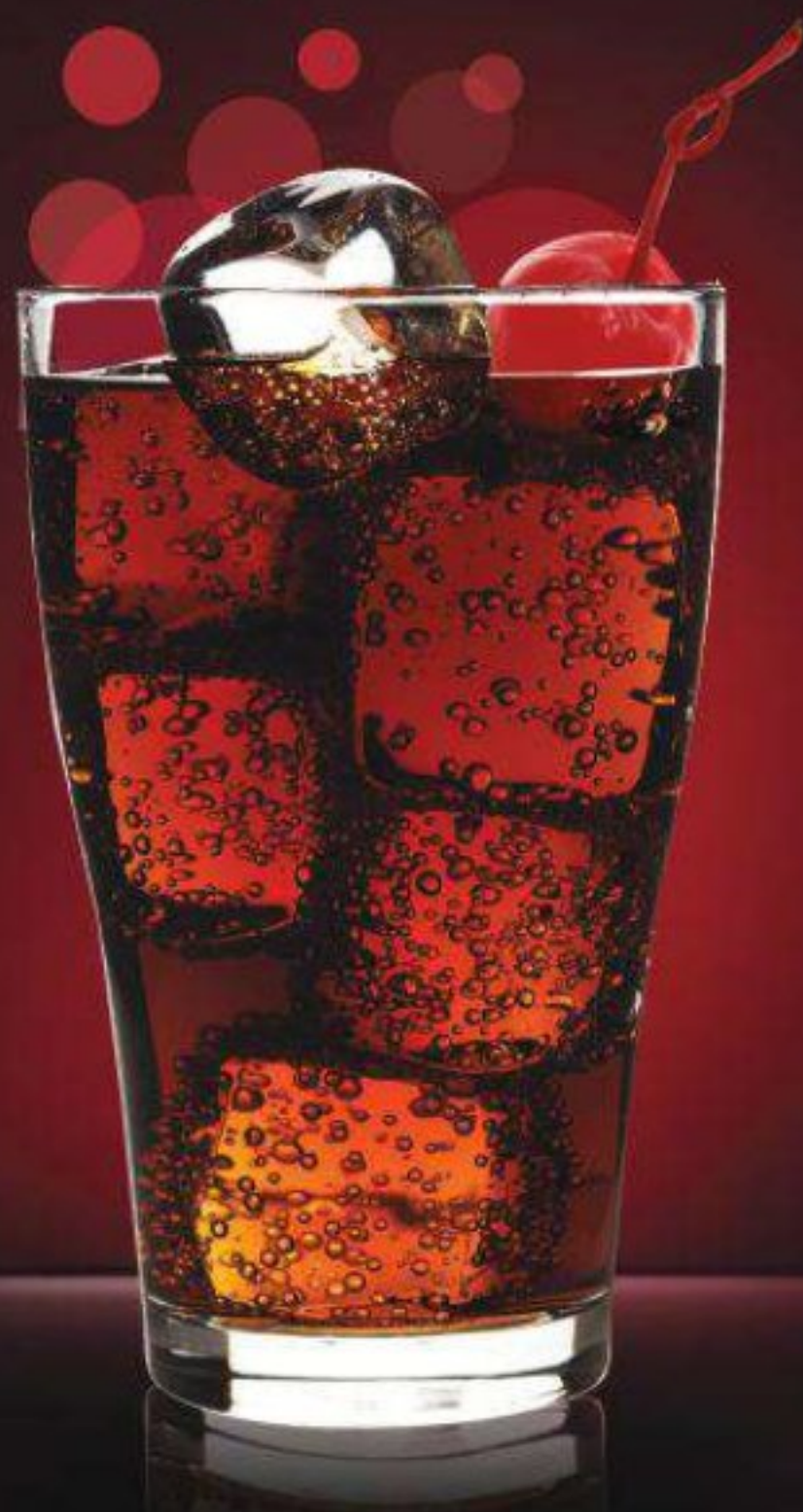
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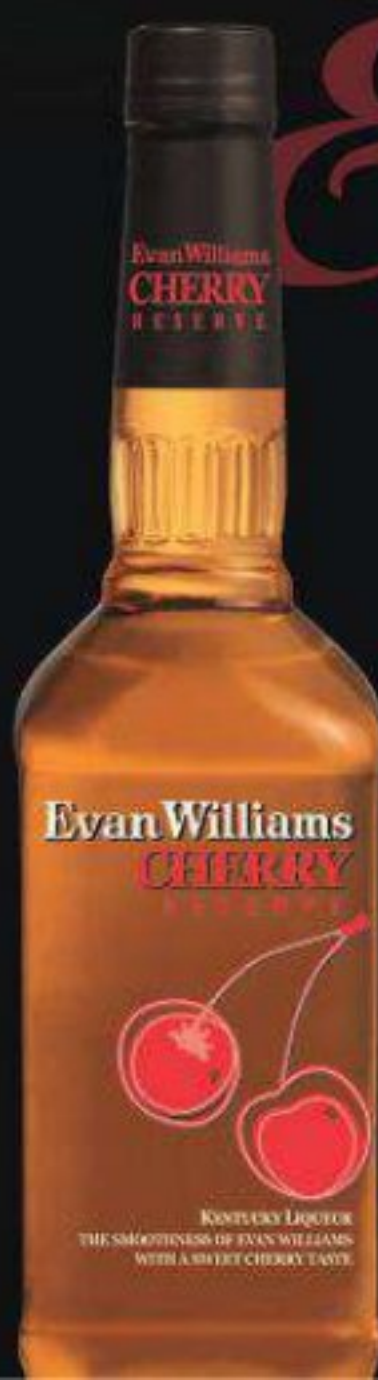
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ROCK&ROLL

Lennon's Lost Letters

ROCK HISTORY New book offers a revealing look at the late Beatle's private life

WHEN YOKO ONO WAS first approached about publishing some of John Lennon's private letters, she was dubious. "Were there any other musicians who've had all they wrote published?" she remembers thinking.

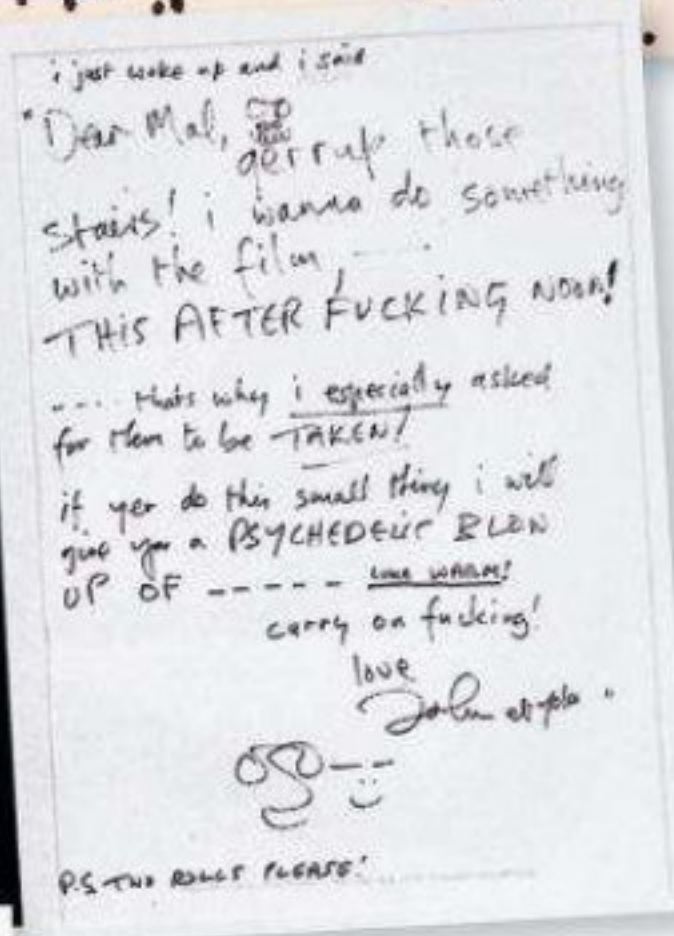
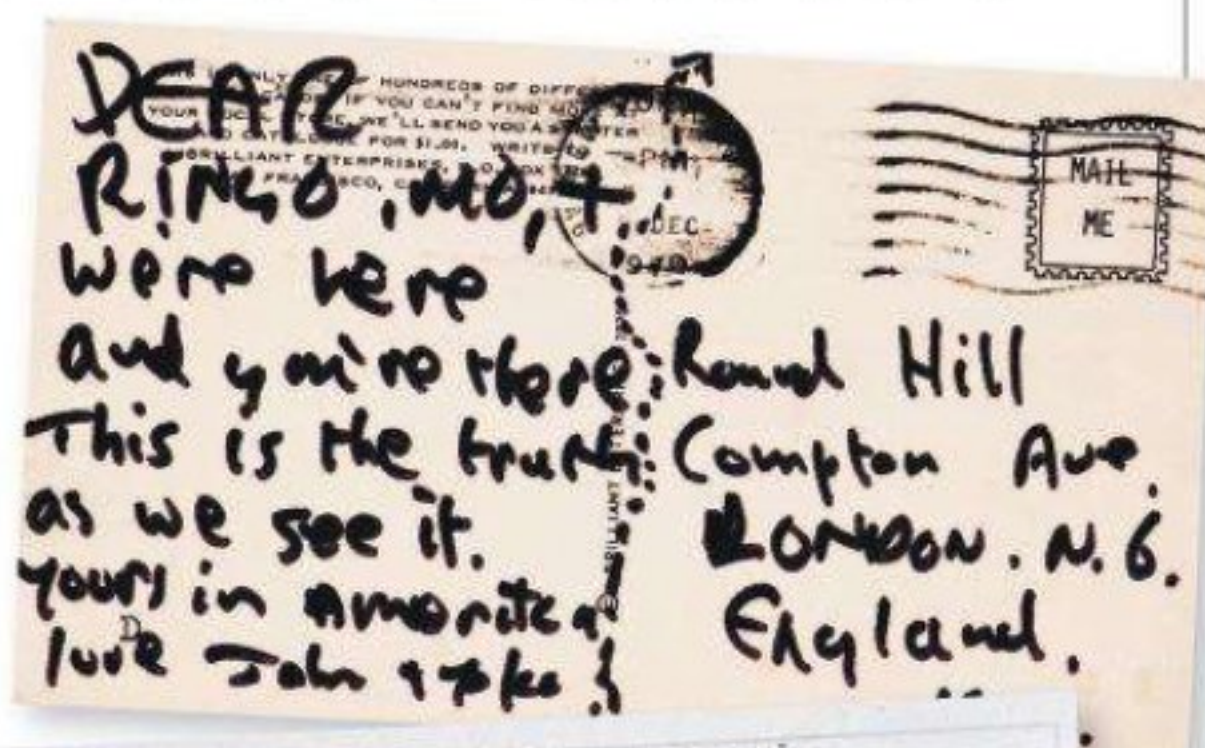
Luckily for Lennon's fans, author Hunter Davies convinced Ono that the time had come for such an anthology. *The John Lennon Letters* reproduces about 300 of Lennon's letters, postcards, childhood writings and more. "It's his life story told in his words," says Davies, who wrote the Beatles' authorized biography in 1968. "You see him in all his facets - furious, warm and friendly, obscene, sensitive."

Highlights of the book include unused liner notes to 1971's *Imagine* ("I've wrecked my throat rocking!"), sweet notes to Lennon's son Julian and errand lists from his last years (including reminders to pick up new albums by Bob Dylan, Randy Newman and even Wings). Says Ono, "Back then, we wrote letters, you know?"

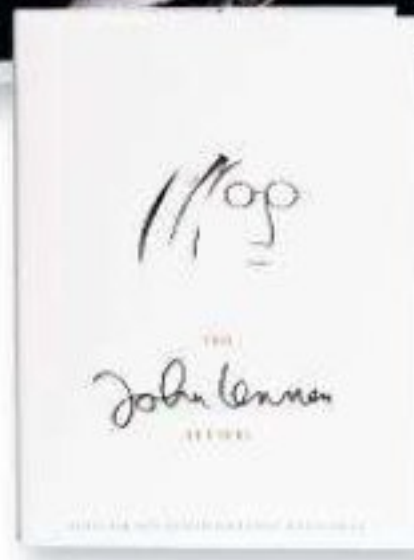
Davies spent two years collecting material from relatives, old schoolmates and auction houses. Paul McCartney told Davies he had two letters from Lennon, but considered them too private to publish. But other documents provide a fascinating view of Lennon's relationship with his ex-

bandmates. Lennon vented his frustrations toward Paul and Linda McCartney in a long, apparently unsent letter from 1971 ("I hope you realize what shit you and the rest of my 'kind and unselfish' friends laid on Yoko and me"), and encouraged Ringo Starr's solo career in postcards. "The myth is that the Beatles were always fighting, but John had a close relationship with them, especially Ringo and George," Ono says. "John always thought he was the leader of the band."

DAVID BROWNE



PLEASE MR. POSTMAN
The John Lennon Letters (left) includes rare notes to friends and ex-bandmates.



bandmates. Lennon vented his frustrations toward Paul and Linda McCartney in a long, apparently

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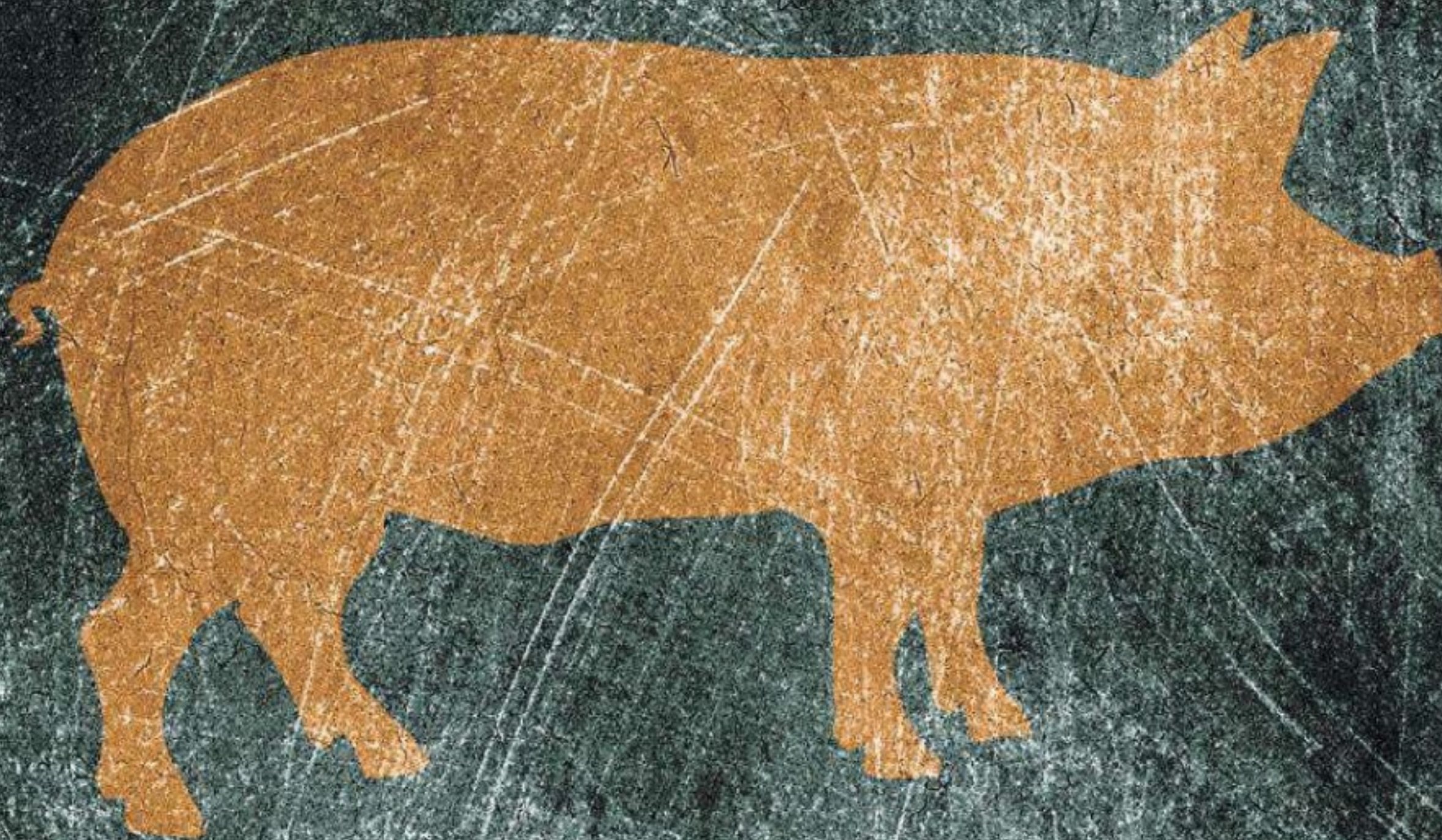


Public Enemy

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: © YOKO ONO, 2; NO CREDIT; KEVIN CUMMINS/GETTY IMAGES; ROB VERHORST/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

"MOST KICKIN' BARBEQUE AROUND"

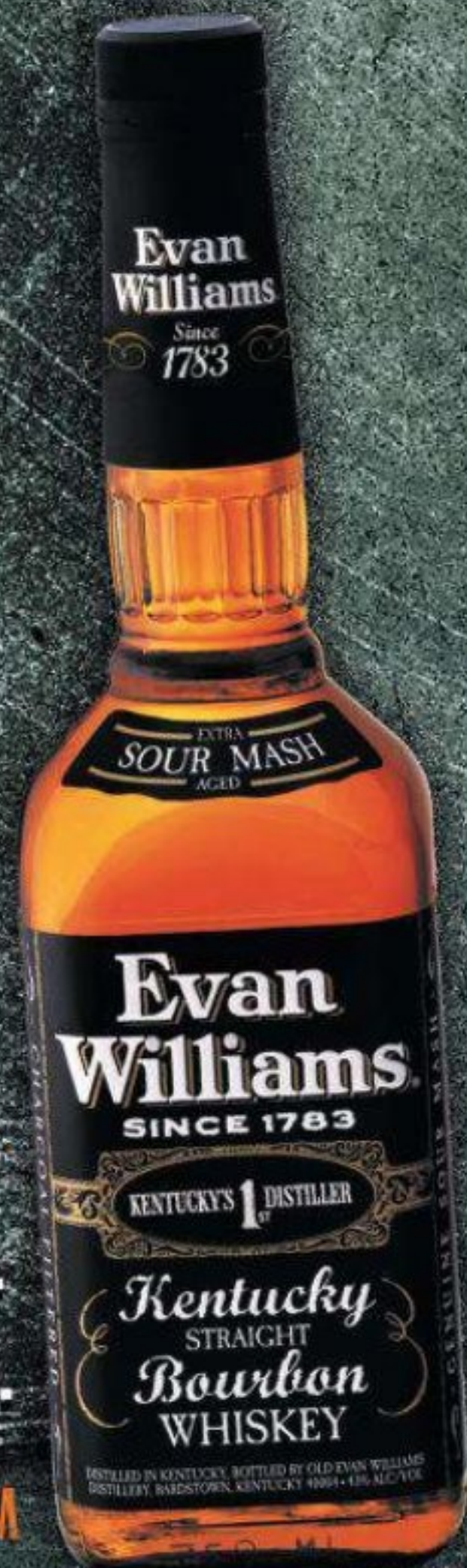
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Seth MacFarlane

The 'Family Guy' mastermind on hosting the Oscars and being hated by the 'South Park' dudes
By Jonah Weiner

SINCE THE 1999 DEBUT OF HIS hit series *Family Guy*, Seth MacFarlane has been best known for his filthy fiefdom of anarchic, envelope-pushing cartoons. Lately he's been expanding his empire, hosting *SNL*, recording a Grammy-nominated album of standards and show tunes, and directing a Hollywood blockbuster, *Ted*, in which MacFarlane gave voice to a horny, drug-abusing toy bear. His official coronation as a showbiz don came earlier this month, when he was announced as next year's Oscar host. But the 39-year-old confesses, "I love a good fart joke."

Why do the Oscars frequently suck, and how will you make them better?

All of them have had redeeming qualities. It's about finding that balance between doing what I do but acknowledging that this is the Academy Awards, not the roast of Donald Trump. It's walking that line between old-fashioned showmanship and allowing it to be contemporary with a little bit of bite. Johnny Carson and Billy Crystal are two hosts who walked that line. There's a moment on *Family Guy* that's just Gene Kelly dancing with Stewie – that's what we have to achieve, a dance between the traditional and the new.

Are you going to write the show with your *Family Guy* team?

The staff hasn't been assembled. But this is not going to be *Family Guy Meets the Oscars*. Hosts who come in with a specific brand and try to turn the show into the brand, it never works. You have to adapt yourself to the Oscars, not vice versa.

For all its success, *Family Guy* is sometimes dismissed as frat-boy humor. Does that surprise you?

A lot of that comes, I think, from people who haven't actually seen the show. They're going with what they've heard. The show itself contains a degree of frat-boy humor – there are fart jokes, there are shit jokes. But we try to include an equal amount of intelligent humor. If it makes you laugh, what's wrong with that? There's room for both highbrow and lowbrow.

Louis C.K. has said he loves *Family Guy*, but the show has also been mocked by *The Simpsons* and *South Park*.

Did you ever feel like you were on the outside of some comedy in-crowd?


At one point, that was the case. But the *Family Guy* crowd and the *Simpsons* crowd have become friendly over time. I thought the *South Park* episode making fun of us was funny and accurate. But what I don't understand is the personal venom that they spew in the press about the show and about me, where it's not in the context of a joke. That's a little baffling. They let loose with this vitriol in every interview I read with them. It'd be interesting to know where it comes from, because I don't know them.

As someone who pokes fun at pieties, what are your thoughts on the *Innocence of Muslims* video and the riots it provoked?

In all honesty, I glaze over with this stuff because it happens all the time over there. There's just constant boiling rage – it's like, "What else is new?" It's just another round of religious-based fury. It's like following the presidential race. I'm yawning. I'm numb.

You're rebooting the Carl Sagan science show *Cosmos*. Do you hope creationists tune in?

Among others. The show doesn't have an agenda. It's going to be educational. Science has become politicized, and that's an embarrassment. Evolution doesn't care whether you believe in it or not, no more than gravity does. I want to rekindle excitement over what we've achieved as a species with the space program. We can't afford to regress back to the days of superstition. *Ted* was about a kid who retains a childhood fantasy into adulthood. You're unmarried, and you make your living in cartoons. Do you feel a bit like an overgrown kid?

Oddly, I don't relate a lot to that character. I never had a stuffed animal I wished would come to life. The story felt universal enough to resonate. But working in entertainment, you have to retain a degree of childishness. That's one reason Spielberg has been so successful: He's been able to maintain that sense of wonder into adulthood. I suppose that makes people like us a little more stunted than everyone else, emotionally. 



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TELEVISION

**VEILED
THREAT**
Danes'
paranoid
superspy,
Carrie
Mathison



Spy, Interrupted

The genius of 'Homeland' is Claire Danes' harrowing performance as a bipolar ex-spook hunting an Al Qaeda sleeper agent By Rob Sheffield

THERE'S A GREAT MOMENT early in the new season of *Homeland*: Claire Danes as ex-CIA agent Carrie Mathison, back on the team for this one last mission, stalks the streets of Beirut, Leb-

Homeland

Sundays, 10 p.m., Showtime

anon. She spots a shady guy trailing her, hangs up on her boss, tosses the cellphone and executes a clever knee-to-groin takedown of her adversary. Then she breaks into a furtively girlish goofball smile, the first moment of happiness she's

had in a long time. For once, she was scared of something that turned out to be real. Just because she's paranoid doesn't mean they're not out to get her.

Created by a couple of 24 vets, *Homeland* might have seemed just like an old-fashioned story: the rogue American superspy who plays by her own rules to save the world from the latest Dr. Evil. She follows her hunches, defies her superiors, ignores the protocols. It might seem a little implausible that she's always right. But it works because it comes down to the story of this woman and her struggle with her sanity.

Danes makes it compelling all by turning on the crazy, with her quivering voice and flinching face muscles. Her main grip on stability is her relationship with her mentor Saul (Mandy Patinkin), playing the Peggy Olson to his Don Draper, the Liz Lemon to his Jack Donaghy. On *Homeland*, the geopolitical hot-button issues don't always come across as credible, but the psychological and emotional issues do. Here, the terrorist conspiracy is embedded so deeply in the U.S. that only the crazy Americans are patriots. Danes' wild-eyed fragility is the proof that she's for real. She's the only

character we can trust because she's constantly about to flip the fuck out.

At the end of the bang-up first season, you could be forgiven for worrying that *Homeland* had used up all its narrative ammunition. Where are they supposed to go from here? We found out the big mystery when we learned that Carrie's hunch was right — Nicholas Brody, the returned POW and new congressman, is a terrorist, turned by Al Qaeda. Then Carrie got axed from the CIA after a complete mental flameout. But *Homeland* doesn't waste any time dragging Carrie out of exile and back into the CIA fold, although this time she's strictly a freelancer. Nobody knows she was on the right trail, not even her; she follows her hunches because she can't control herself. There's an element of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* in all her lonely struggle. Buffy's epitaph read, "She Saved the World. A Lot." Carrie's in the same business.

Homeland is a paranoid drama for a paranoid nation, one where the threat of terrorism is constant, yet inert.

Morally and politically, it's not all that far removed from 24. The good guys may have their flaws, but *Homeland* doesn't question that they're doing what has to be done. And while the bad guys have their reasons, the good guys/bad guys line remains suspiciously tidy. As Carrie, Danes is the element that messes up all this tidiness; she's scary, unstable, out of control. She panics over actual threats as well as things that are merely in her head. In other words, she's human. And ultimately, her humanity is what keeps *Homeland* fascinating. **C**

SHORT TAKE

The Unlikely Return of Prime Time's Weirdest Crew

Community

Fridays, 8:30 p.m., NBC

Escaping the NBC ax came at a huge price for *Community* — creator Dan Harmon got the boot. But mercifully, the new showrunners don't seem to be going for a weird-down. They understand that despite all the surreal stoner humor, these

are some of the most emotionally authentic, poignantly warped characters on TV. They even begin with a joke about the regime change, as Troy returns to campus, looks around and says, "Wait a minute, something's changed." Abed asks, "Twelve additional thumbtacks on that board?" The new season starts strong with a riotous first

episode, as the Greendale study group returns for senior year. As Annie says, "Woo-hoo! Sad slow march toward death begins!" So sure, it could be a travesty, like the albums the Doors made after Jim Morrison died, but more likely it will be another great run. Last

season began with a musical number promising, "We're gonna have more fun and be less weird than the first two years combined!" But there's a firm limit on how nonweird you can make these people, and that's good news. **R.S.**



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[†]The Kia Optima received the highest numerical score among midsize cars in a tie in the proprietary J.D. Power and Associates 2012 Automotive Performance, Execution and Layout Study.SM Study based on responses from 74,759 new-vehicle owners, measuring 233 models and measures opinions after 90 days of ownership. Proprietary study results are based on experiences and perceptions of owners surveyed in February-May 2012. Your experiences may vary. Visit jdpower.com/Kia. Optima Hybrid quantities are limited and available only at hybrid-authorized Kia dealers. Check with your local Kia dealer. **Optima SX Limited shown.**

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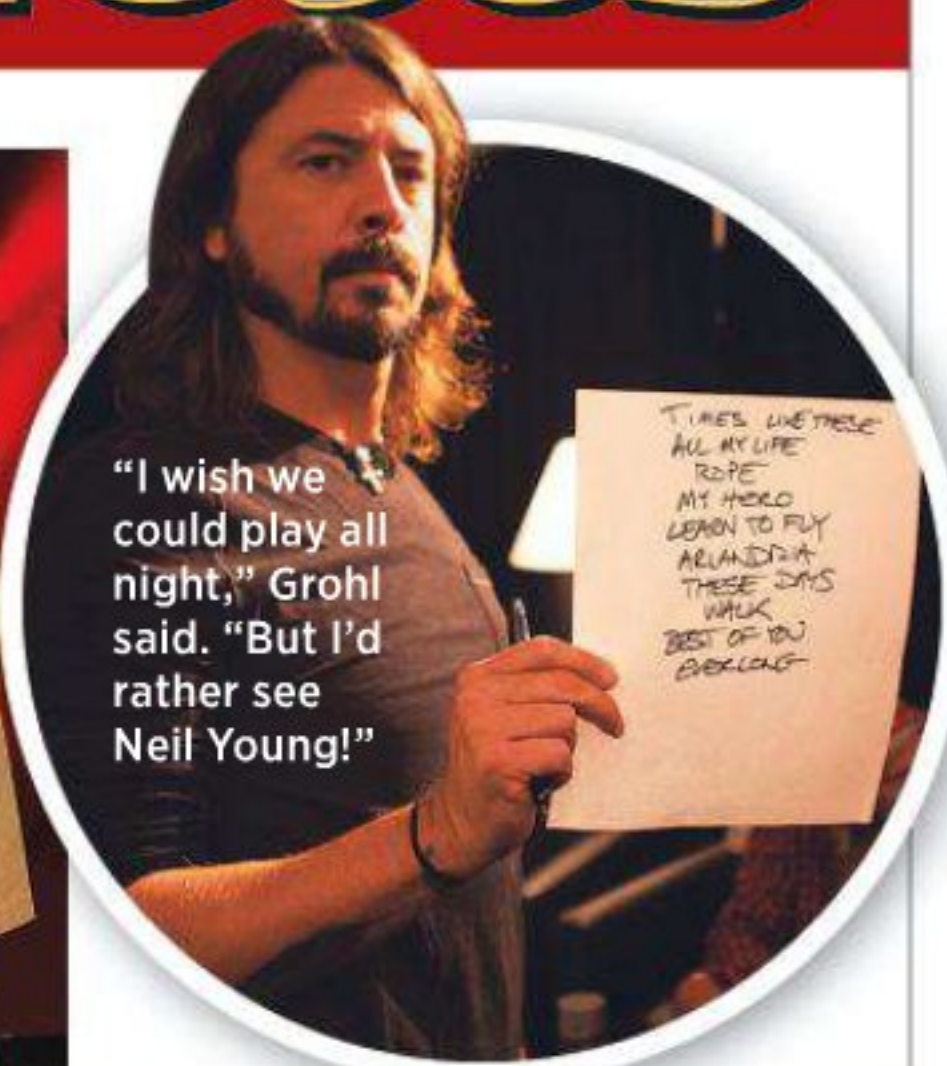
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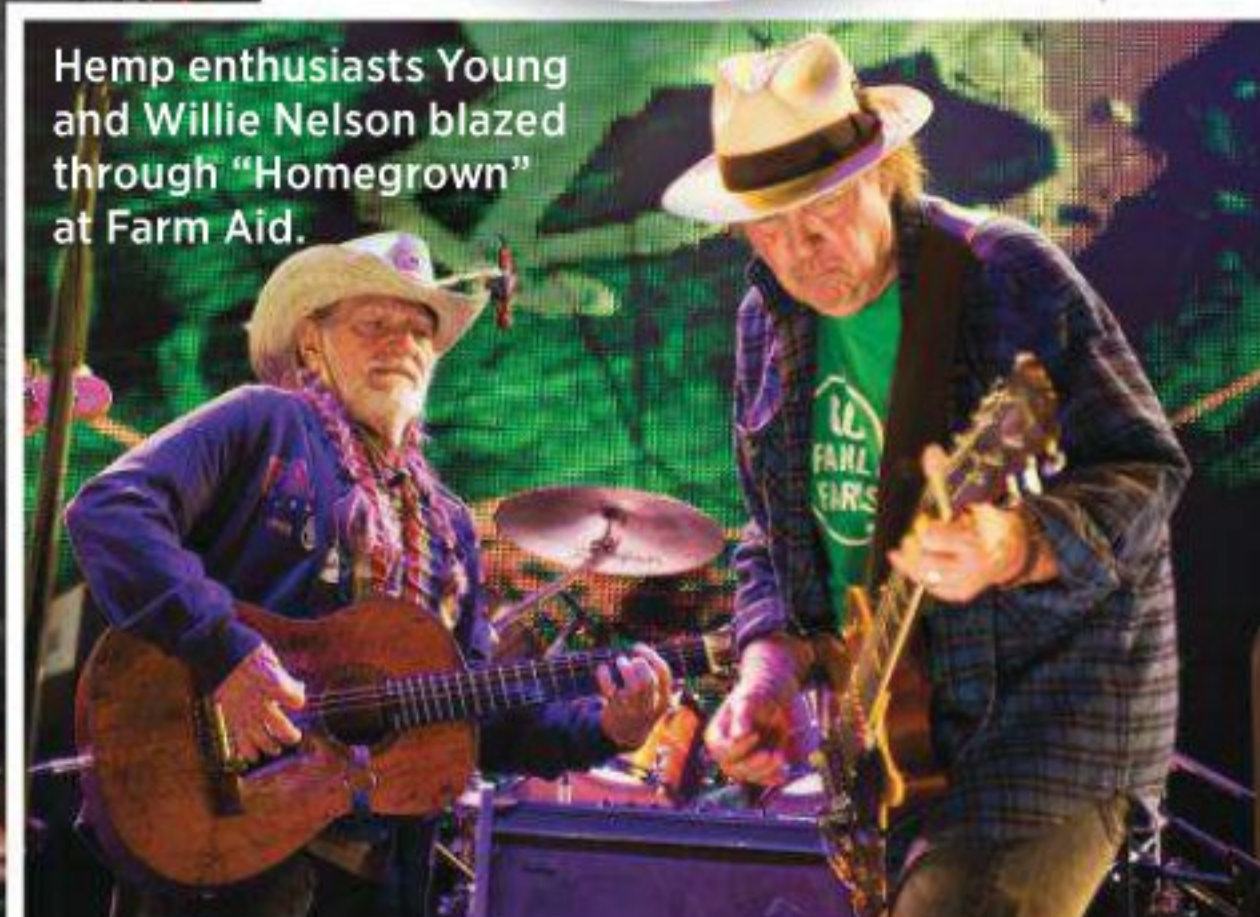
Random Notes



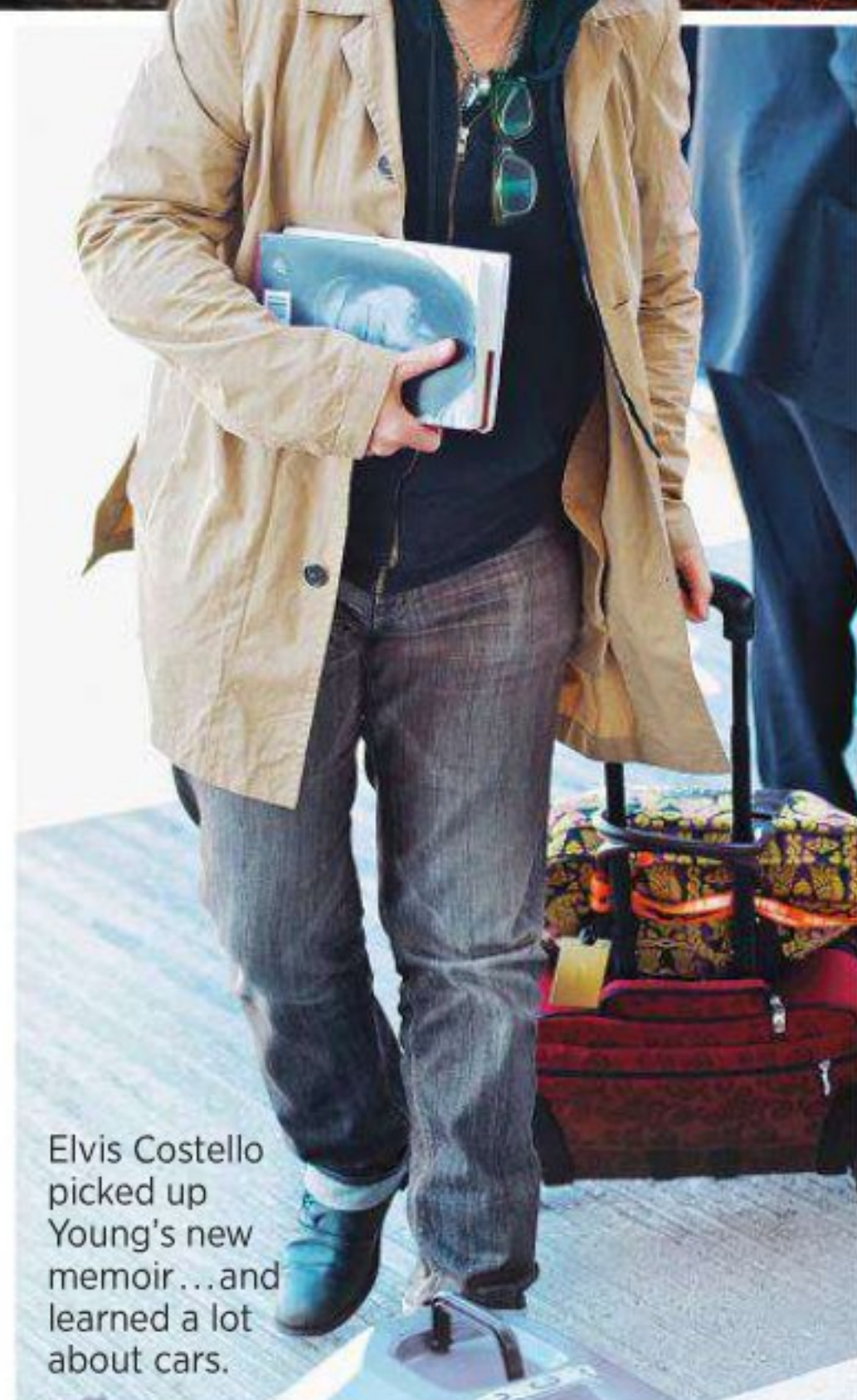
Grohl, Young and the Black Keys' Dan Auerbach went to jam heaven in front of 60,000 fans.



"I wish we could play all night," Grohl said. "But I'd rather see Neil Young!"



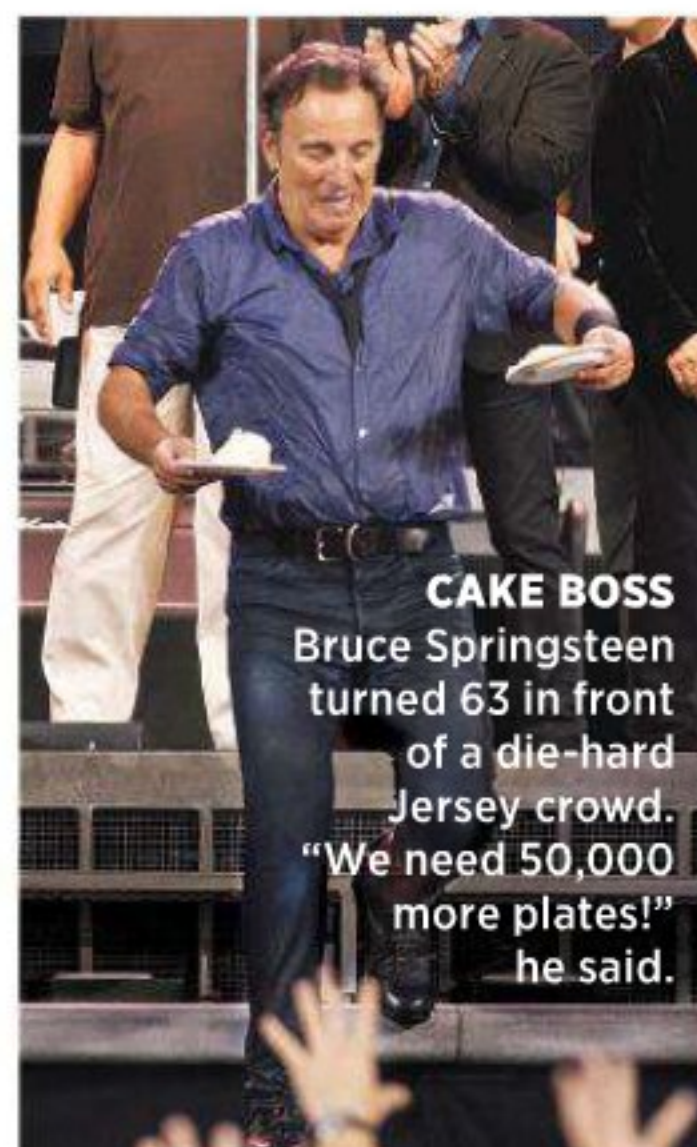
Hemp enthusiasts Young and Willie Nelson blazed through "Homegrown" at Farm Aid.



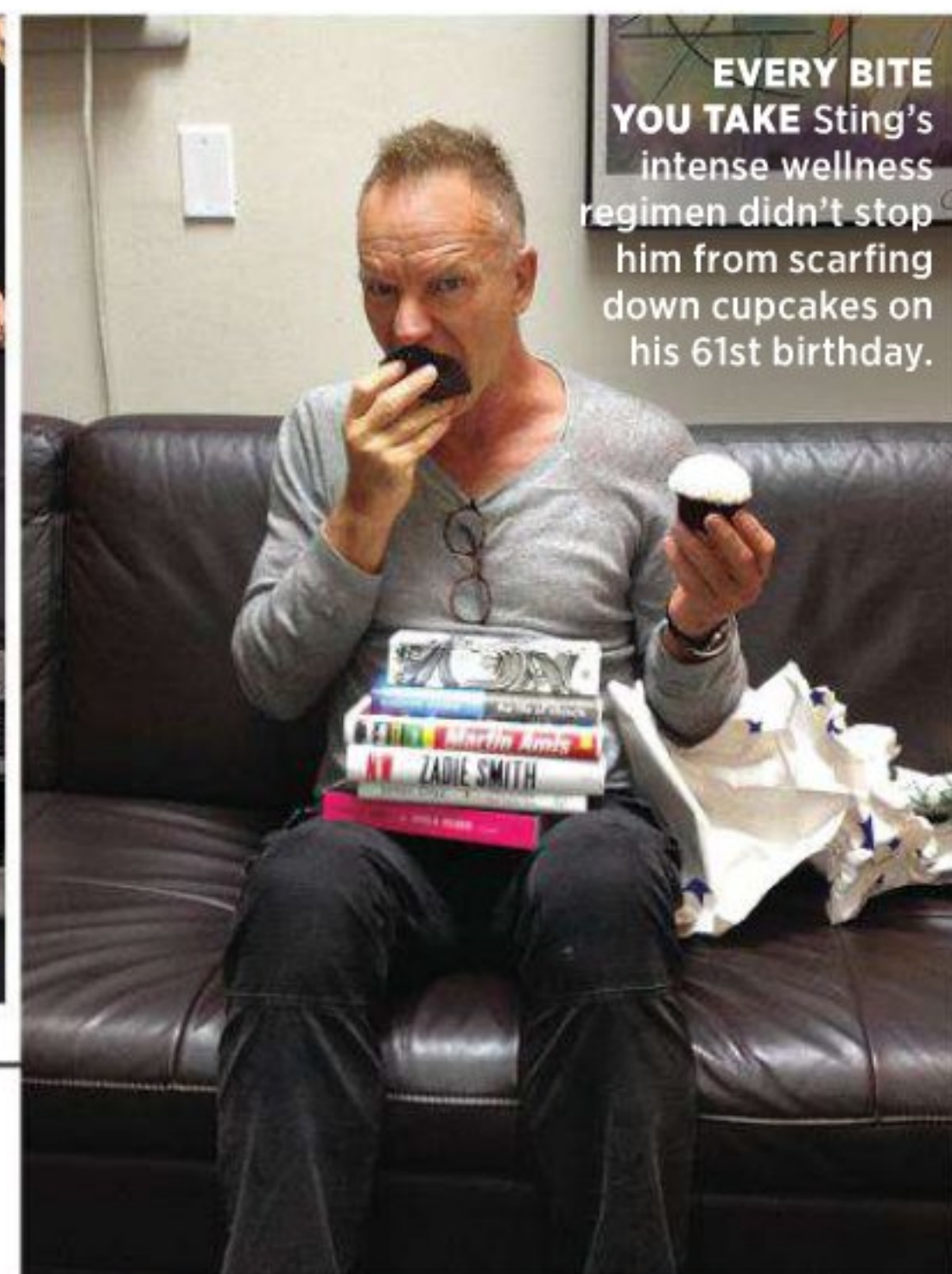
Elvis Costello picked up Young's new memoir...and learned a lot about cars.

Neil Young: Back on the Horse

From Farm Aid to Central Park, Neil Young and Crazy Horse have been working overtime. At New York's Global Citizen Fest, Young invited his opening acts onstage for "Rockin' in the Free World," giving them an advanced tutorial in feedback-soaked awesomeness. "Never in my wildest dreams did I think Foo Fighters would make it this far," Dave Grohl said.

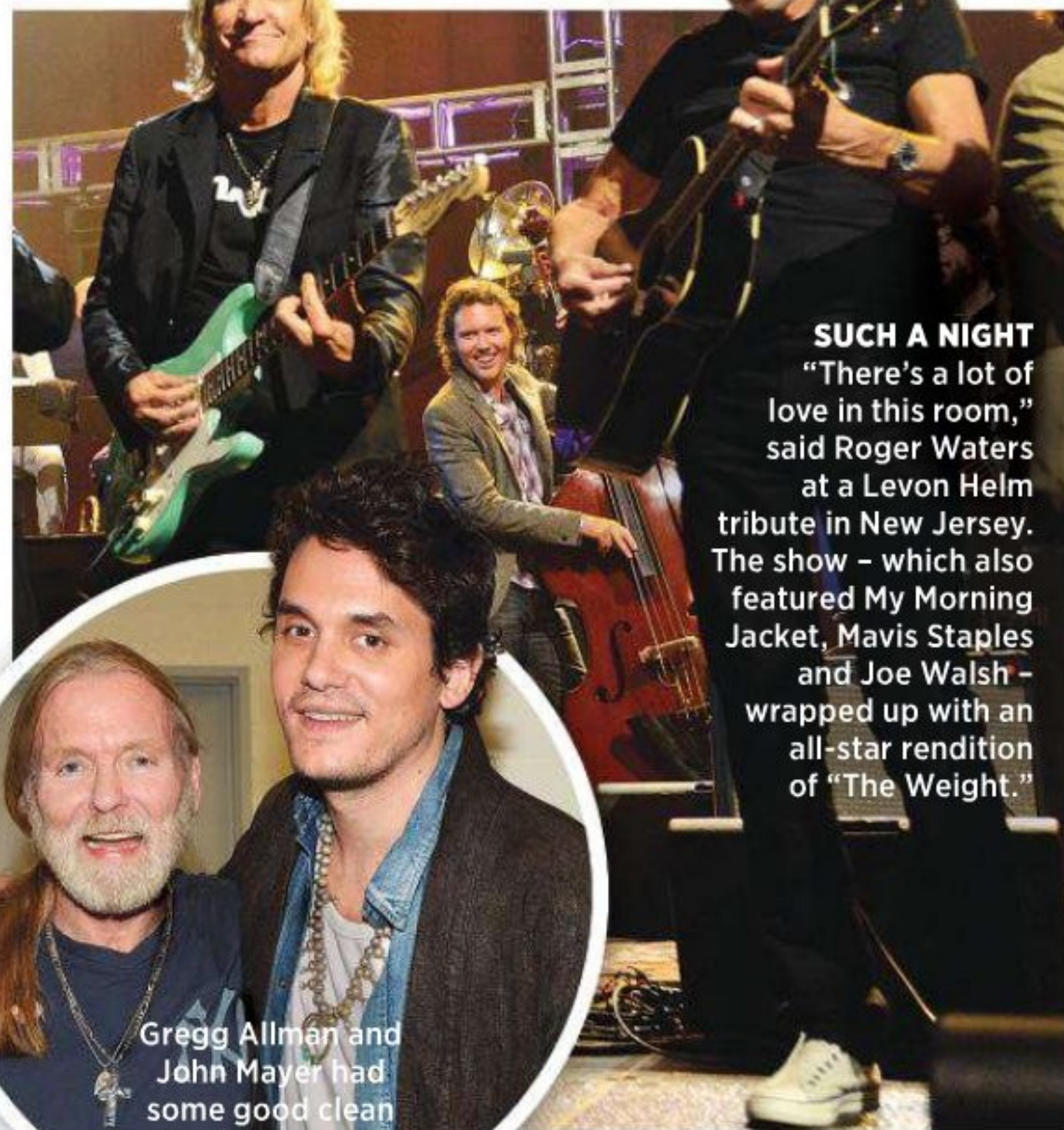


CAKE BOSS Bruce Springsteen turned 63 in front of a die-hard Jersey crowd. "We need 50,000 more plates!" he said.



EVERY BITE YOU TAKE Sting's intense wellness regimen didn't stop him from scarfing down cupcakes on his 61st birthday.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: KEVIN MAZUR/WIREIMAGE; DANNY CLINCH; TIMOTHY HIATT/GETTY IMAGES; NO CREDIT; A.M. SADDLER; BRYAN/NPG.COM

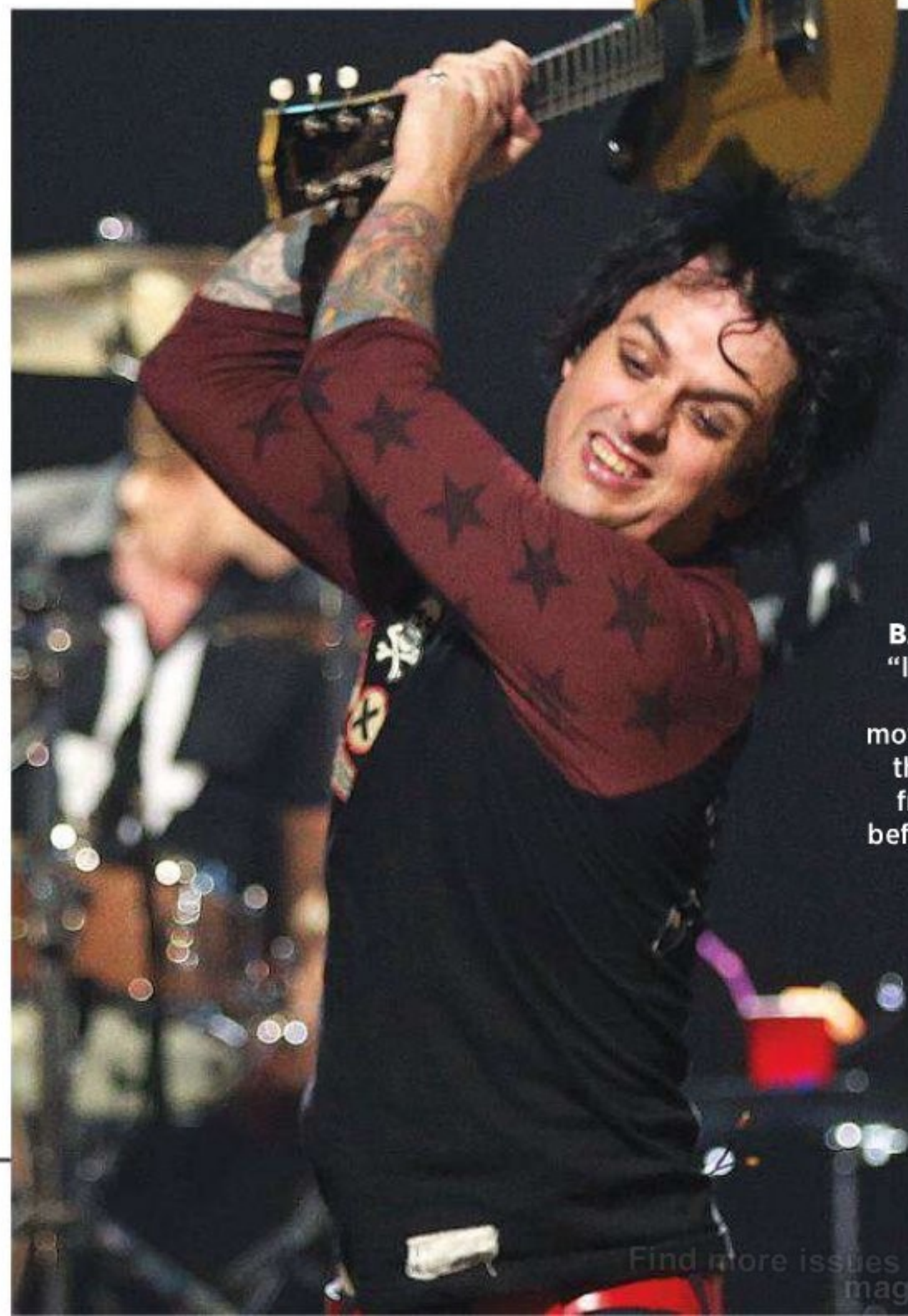


SUCH A NIGHT
 "There's a lot of love in this room," said Roger Waters at a Levon Helm tribute in New Jersey. The show - which also featured My Morning Jacket, Mavis Staples and Joe Walsh - wrapped up with an all-star rendition of "The Weight."

Gregg Allman and John Mayer had some good clean fun backstage.

Billie's Bad Day

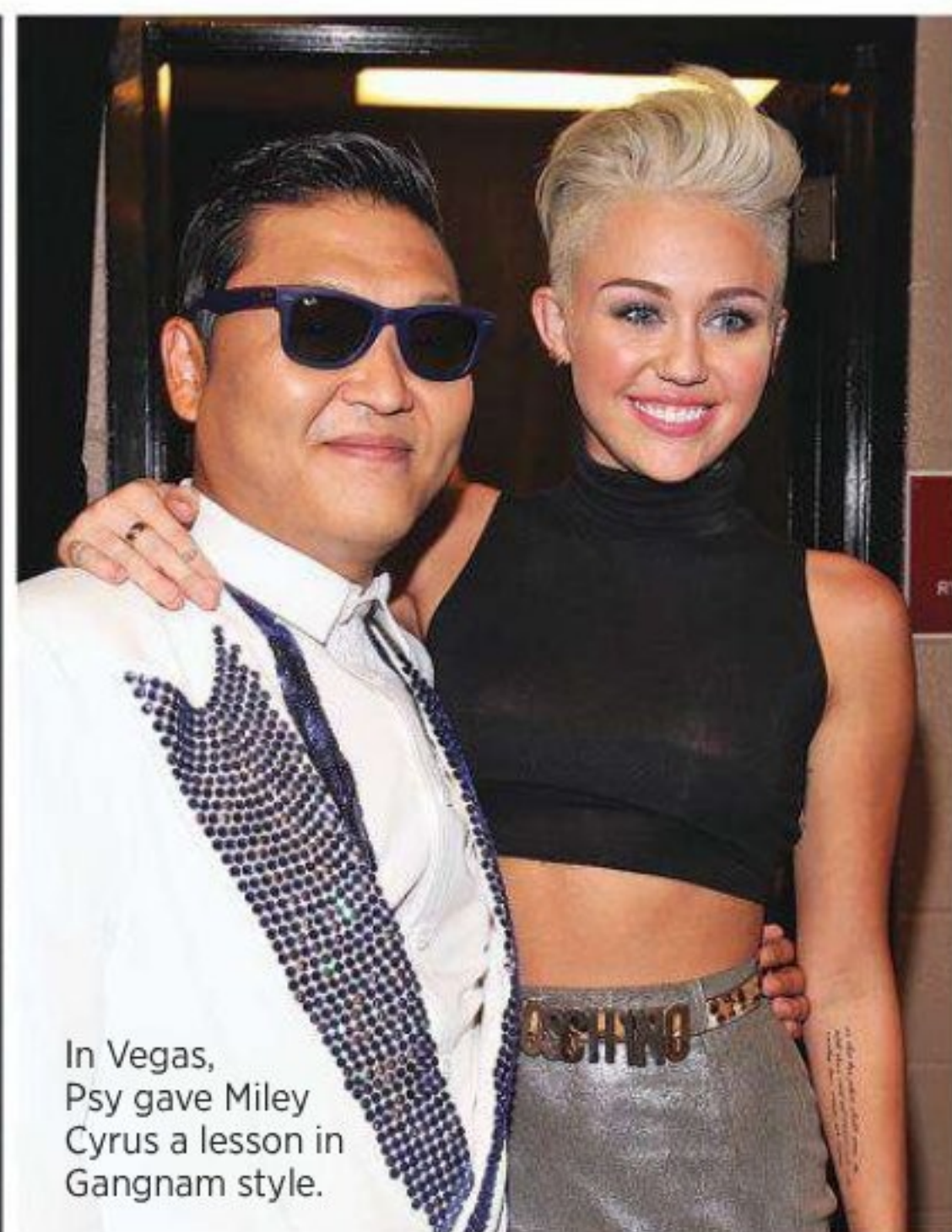
Las Vegas' ultracorporate iHeartRadio fest was going great - until Billie Joe Armstrong went on a guitar-smashing tirade that landed him in rehab. Get well soon!



BASKET CASE
 "I'm not Justin Bieber, you motherfuckers," the Green Day frontman said before storming offstage.



MY BOLOGNA
 In Belgium, Lady Gaga roasted critics the only way she knows how: by diving into a giant meat grinder during "Poker Face."



In Vegas, Psy gave Miley Cyrus a lesson in Gangnam style.



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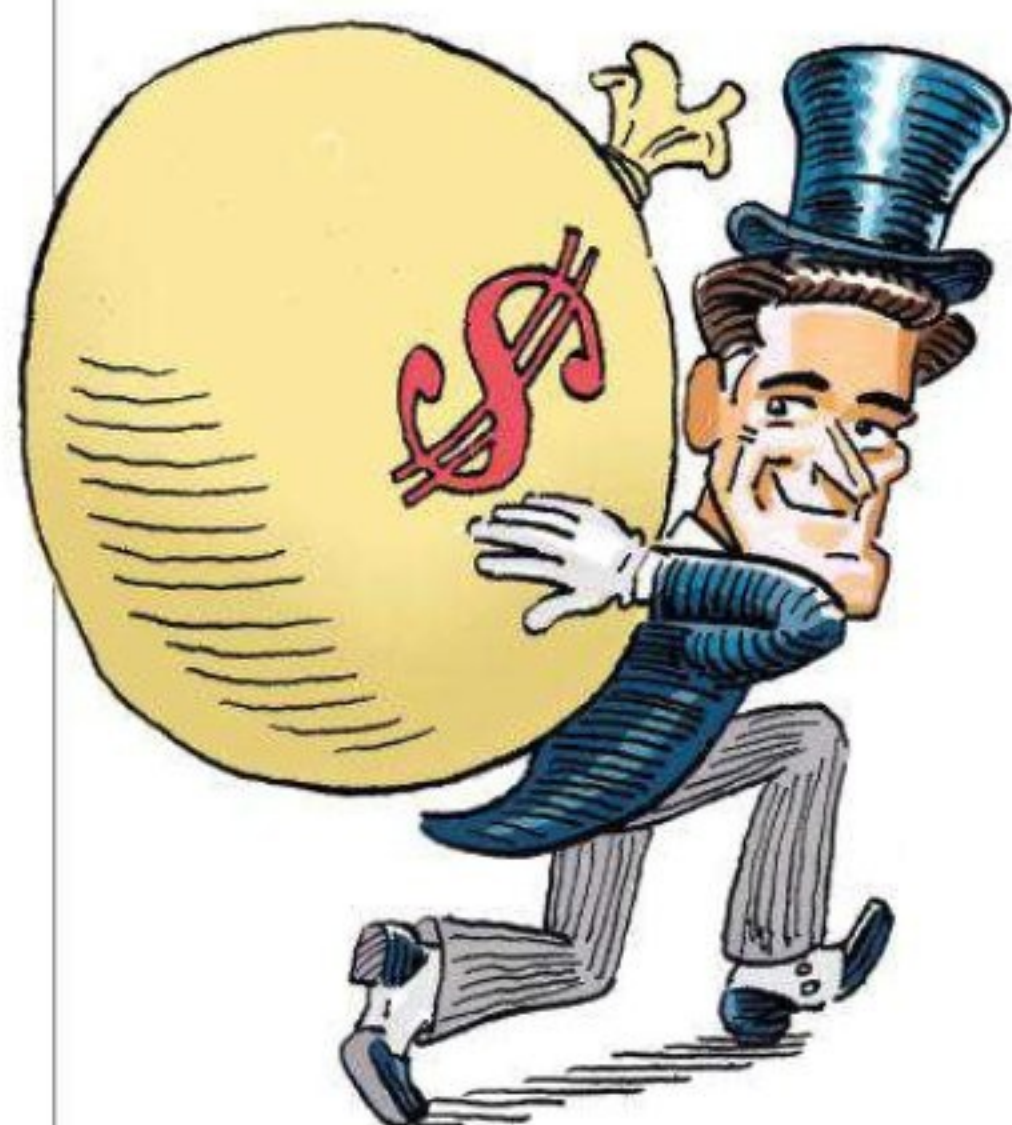


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MITT ROMNEY'S TAX LAUNDRY

A guide to how the multimillionaire twists the law to hide his massive fortune – and dodge his fair share in taxes

★ By Tim Dickinson ★



HOW DOES A PRIVATE-EQUITY kingpin worth at least \$250 million pay a lower tax rate – just 14 percent – than many teachers and firemen? By exploiting tax loopholes that favor the rich and hiding his money in the world's most notorious havens for tax cheats. That's what Mitt Romney has done, according to his 2010 and 2011 tax returns, a trove of secret Bain Capital documents unearthed by Gawker, and exposés by Bloomberg and *Vanity Fair*. "The bottom line," says Rebecca Wilkins, senior counsel at Citizens for Tax Justice, "is that these are ways to reduce your taxes that are only available to rich people."

Are Romney's tax dodges legal? It's impossible to say for sure, given how little he has disclosed. But tax experts note that there are plenty of red flags, including an investigation by New York prosecutors into tax abuses at Bain Capital that began on Romney's watch. "He aggressively exploits every loophole he can find," says Victor Fleischer, a professor of tax law at the University of Colorado. "He's pushing the limits of tax law beyond what many think is reasonable." Indeed, a look at Romney's finances reveals just how skilled he is at hiding his wealth – and paying a fraction of his fair share in taxes.

SWISS SECRECY

ON HIS 2010 TAX RETURN, ROMNEY disclosed that his wife Ann's trust held \$3 million in a **SWISS BANK ACCOUNT** at UBS, which had just been busted by the IRS for abetting criminal tax evasion by U.S. citizens. As part of a \$780 million settlement, UBS was forced to turn over the names of thousands of its long-secret clients, who were then offered a partial amnesty: disclose their hidden assets, pay penalties and avoid prosecution. Romney – who had omitted the Swiss account on previous financial disclosures – suddenly came clean. Did he reveal his secret account to avoid prosecution for tax evasion? "He's not quite denied that," says Daniel Shaviro, a professor of tax law at NYU. The record of paying an IRS penalty on the Swiss account could explain why Romney has been so determined to keep his 2009 tax return under wraps.



BERMUDA SHELL GAME

ROMNEY HAS BURIED AN UNKNOWN, and perhaps significant, chunk of his wealth in what SEC filings describe as "a Bermuda corporation wholly owned by W. Mitt Romney" – driving speculation that the candidate is worth far more than he has disclosed publicly. Wealthy Americans frequently launder investments through such offshore **SHELL COMPANIES**, passing themselves off as foreign investors – a scam that makes them exempt from paying U.S. taxes, even on profits from American

deals. Romney created his shell company, Sankaty High Yield Asset Investors, in 1997 and reportedly involved it in many of Bain's biggest deals, including the takeover of Domino's Pizza. Yet he failed to report its existence on any financial disclosures prior to his 2010 tax return, even though it is under his control. "What is this corporation? What does it do? Why was it set up in a tax haven?" asks Wilkins. "There's a reason why it's in Bermuda."

LUXEMBOURG SHELTER

IN 2000, WHEN ROMNEY WAS CEO OF Bain, the firm hit the jackpot: A \$40 million investment in the Italian yellow pages during the tech boom returned an astonishing \$1 billion. Romney himself reportedly ended up with \$50 million – a cut larger than Bain's initial investment. To evade taxes on the gains, Romney steered the profits through **BAIN SUBSIDIARIES IN LUXEMBOURG**, Europe's most notorious tax shelter, where the money would be exempt from foreign taxes. In 2009, as a board member for Marriott, Romney also helped the hotel chain use the same tax tricks to shelter more than \$200 million in Luxembourg. Marriott wound up paying less than half the corporate tax rate – just 16.9 percent.

CAYMAN CASH

ROMNEY HAS NEARLY \$30 MILLION stashed in at least a dozen Bain funds in the Cayman Islands, where, as one filing boasts, investments are free from "income, estate, transfer, sales, or other Cayman Islands taxes." But because some of those funds are directly invested in U.S. companies, they likely disclose their investors to the IRS, making them unattractive to tax cheats. So Bain also raises capital for its deals by selling shares in **"FEEDER FUNDS"** – intermediary entities that invest in Bain's official funds, but don't have to make disclosures to the IRS. "If you want to cheat, they've rolled out the red carpet for you," says Wilkins.

Has Romney paid all his taxes on the shady funds? Only he and the IRS know for sure. But even if Romney never cheated personally, the feeder funds he appears to have invested in cater to tax criminals, making it easier for him and his Bain partners to raise capital and rake in big management fees.

Romney *is* profiting from one form of tax evasion in the Caymans: **EQUITY SWAPS**. Under this racket run by top Wall Street banks, American firms pay out their profits – tax-free – to investment funds based in the Caymans. According to a Senate investigation, the purpose of these complex instruments is “to dodge payment of U.S. taxes on U.S. stock div-

A BIG LOOPHOLE

FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES, ROMNEY claims his investments are held in a blind trust that he doesn’t actively manage. (In fact, the trust sees just fine: It’s managed by a close friend and is invested heavily in his son Tagg’s hedge fund.) But if Romney told the IRS he were merely a passive investor, he wouldn’t qualify for his most notorious tax break: the loophole for **CARRIED INTEREST**.

Here’s how it works: Bain partners earn a cut of the profits from the investments they manage – usually 30 percent. This “carried interest” is not a return on any personal investment they made – it’s just another form



idends.” Romney has more than \$1.25 million invested in four funds that profit from equity swaps – including two managed by Goldman Sachs.

RETIREMENT TRICKS

ROMNEY HAS STOCKPILED AS MUCH AS \$87 million in his IRA – even though contributions to such retirement accounts are limited to just \$30,000 a year. “Congress never intended IRAs to be used to accumulate that kind of wealth,” says Wilkins. To get around the limits, Romney appears to have directed his IRA to invest in a **SPECIAL CLASS OF BAIN STOCK**. By assigning an artificially low value to the shares, Bain ensured that any returns would be wildly inflated – as much as 30 times the initial investment. By buying rigged stock with his limited IRA dollars, Romney got to reap the bonanza tax-free.

Romney also padded his IRA by investing in **“BLOCKER FUNDS”** that Bain has set up in the Caymans. Such funds attract tax-exempt investors – like college endowments or Romney’s IRA – that want to avoid paying the Unrelated Business Income Tax, a 35 percent penalty designed to prevent tax-exempt investors from having an unfair advantage over for-profit businesses in private-equity deals. But by buying shares in offshore blocker funds that then invest in Bain and other takeover artists, investors like Romney bilk the Treasury out of \$100 million a year. “It’s an absurdly easy escape,” says Shaviro.

of compensation, like an ordinary paycheck. Yet under the carried-interest loophole, the earnings are taxed at the capital-gains rate of 15 percent, rather than the income-tax rate of 35 percent. (They’re also completely exempt from payroll taxes, which support Social Security and Medicare.) “When Romney says, ‘I have a low tax rate because most of my income comes from investments,’ that’s not really true,” says Fleischer. “He’s receiving carried interest in exchange for past services.”

Indeed, more than a decade after he left Bain, Romney is still booking carried interest as though he were actively leading the firm. Ann Romney’s blind trust also claims carried interest, for allegedly “performing services” for a Bain fund in the Caymans. In the past two years alone, the loophole has allowed the Romneys to dodge \$2.6 million in taxes.

FEE FAKERY

NOT CONTENT WITH THE CARRIED-interest boondoggle, Bain also uses a scheme known as **FEE CONVERSION** to transform smaller management fees – which are supposed to be taxed as regular earnings – into investment income taxed at only 15 percent. A Bain manager simply “waives” his right to his fee and is instead staked an investment of equal value in the private equity fund. Because the manager can then cherry-pick from the fund’s investments, he is virtually guaranteed a rich return – flouting the spirit of the lower tax rate on capital gains, which is de-

signed to reward investors who take risks with their money. “Because they didn’t receive the cash, they claim that it’s not a taxable event,” says Fleischer. “It’s not legal.” New York’s attorney general has launched a criminal investigation into the practice.

Romney denies he took part in such waivers, which may have robbed the Treasury of up to \$220 million. But according to Fleischer, Romney’s financial records suggest he “benefited personally from fee conversion.” He also served as the sole shareholder in the firm that set up the deals, making him legally responsible for determining how Bain structured them.

TAX-FREE TRUST

ROMNEY HAS SHIFTED ENORMOUS wealth – as much as \$100 million – into a family trust, a fortune he doesn’t include in the \$250 million estimate of his net worth. His campaign admits he paid **NO GIFT TAXES** in transferring assets to the trust, even though individual gifts above \$13,000 are subject to taxation. A direct gift of \$100 million would have incurred a tax hit of at least \$29 million, according to Michael Graetz, a former Treasury official under George H.W. Bush.

How did Romney skirt the limits on gifts? Tax experts believe that he made his contributions to the trust in the form of the carried interest he received from his Bain funds. For income-tax purposes, the assets were technically valued at zero, because the gains would not be taxed until the fund’s investments were cashed out years later. In reality, though, Romney could have sold his carried interest to a third party for millions – making it absurd for him to pretend that his gift had no market value. Yet even if the move was illegal, Romney has nothing to fear: Tax returns on gifts are almost never audited, and they can’t be challenged at all after three years.

Romney also used a scheme called an **“INTENTIONALLY DEFECTIVE GRANTOR TRUST”** to dodge the gift tax.

Instead of having the trust pay taxes on its profits, Romney pays the tax bill himself. That keeps more money in the trust – amounting to another massive transfer of wealth that evades the gift tax. Even worse, the trust is **EXEMPT FROM THE ESTATE TAX** – meaning Romney’s heirs will eventually pocket some \$31 million they would have owed in taxes had he not siphoned off his fortune into the trust, tax-free.



Blame the Media

★ By Matt Taibbi ★

WELL, IT'S OVER. OR ALMOST OVER, thank God. It looks like Obama will probably win, which I guess is good news, compared to the alternative – a Mitt Romney presidency would have felt like four straight years of waking up with a naked Lloyd Blankfein sitting on your face. But it's not so much the result that matters – it's the quiet.

What we Americans go through to pick a president is not only crazy and unnecessary but genuinely abusive. Hundreds of millions of dollars are spent in a craven, cynical effort to stir up hatred and anger on both sides. A decision that in reality takes one or two days of careful research to make is somehow stretched out into a process that involves two years of relentless, suffocating mind-warfare, an onslaught of toxic media messaging directed at liberals, conservatives and everyone in between that by Election Day makes every dinner conversation dangerous and literally divides families.

Politicians are much to blame for this, but we in the media have to take responsibility for the damage we do to the American psyche in the name of election coverage. At this very moment, there are people all over the country who are stocking up on canned goods and ammo for the apocalypse they believe will come if Obama is re-elected. For the broadcast business to be successful, viewers need to be not merely interested in our political melodramas, they have to be in an absolute *state* about them – emotionally invested in the outcome and frightened not to watch what happens next. And any person who's been subjected to 720 consecutive days of propaganda is not likely to take the news well if he gets the wrong result, whether it's a victory for Obama or for Romney. By that point, the networks have spent two years finding new ways each day to convince him that the world is going to disintegrate into some commie or Hitlerian version of *Mad Max*, to keep him coming back and watching ads.

The campaign should start and finish in six weeks, and there should be free TV access to both candidates. And it should be illegal to publish poll numbers. This isn't as crazy as it sounds – they actually had such a law in Russia while I lived there, and people were much happier. (Well, they were still miserable, because they were Russian, but at least they weren't stressing about poll numbers.) Think about it: Banning poll numbers would force the media to actually cover the issues. As it stands now, the horse race is the *entire* story – I can think of a couple of cable networks that would have to go completely dark tomorrow, as in Dan-Rather-Dead-Fucking-Air dark, if they had to come up with even 10 seconds of news content that wasn't centered on who was winning.

That's the dirtiest secret we in the media have kept from you over the years: Most of us suck so badly at our jobs, and are so uninterested in delving into any polysyllabic subject, that we would literally have to put down our shovels and go home if we didn't have poll numbers we can use to terrify our audiences. Can you imagine if your favorite news network had to do stories like, "What is the Overseas Private Investment Corporation up to, and what do each of the candidates think about it?" That would be like asking Nineties-era baseball players to take the field without popping greenies – what, you mean play the game *sober*? Half the on-air talent would have to resign, or do ad work hawking reverse mortgages.

It obviously matters who gets to be president. And it's perfectly valid for us media types to advocate for the candidate we think is more qualified, based on our reporting. But the hype has gotten so out of control, it's become bigger than the presidency itself. In every race there are now not two but

three dominating figures – the Democrat, the Republican and The Process, and we're raising whole generations who hate The Process far more than they like either of the candidates. Mainly for grim commercial reasons, we in the media manipulate people to stay wired on hate and panic-focused on the race for every waking moment, indifferent to how much this depresses the hell out of everyone. In doing so, we rob people of their



patriotism and their desire to vote. If The Process is so clearly wrong, how right can the candidates be?

If we did this right, people would come out of presidential elections exhilarated, maybe even stoked to get involved in their local races for county sheriff or D.A. (Such races would likely have more of an impact on their day-to-day lives: For the most part, when it comes to our daily routines, the president might as well be on Mars.) Instead, most of us come out of the election exhausted, in desperate need of a couple of Ambiens and determined to spend the next two years buried in Hulu reruns, afraid to even *pass* a news channel while couch-surfing our way to *Storage Wars* or a Lifetime movie.

What makes us feel pessimistic about the world, ultimately, is the way the media encourage us to believe that our fate hangs on the every move of the promise-breaking, terminally disappointing Teflon liars in Washington. And that's a shame, because feeling optimistic shouldn't require turning off the TV or tuning out The Process. What we are witnessing, after all, is the world's greatest contest for power, an amazing fairy tale full of iconic moments that we'll watch no matter how much Sean Hannity or Chris Matthews screams at us. But it would be awesome, next time, if we could find a way to turn down the volume.



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“TODAY, AS WE REDUCE THE BUDGET AND CUT THE DEBT, WE HAVE TO REMEMBER THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF THE ARTS AND PUBLIC EDUCATION TO THE FUTURE OF AMERICA.”

- CHRIS MATTHEWS

LEAN FORWARD

CHRIS MATTHEWS, msnbc host



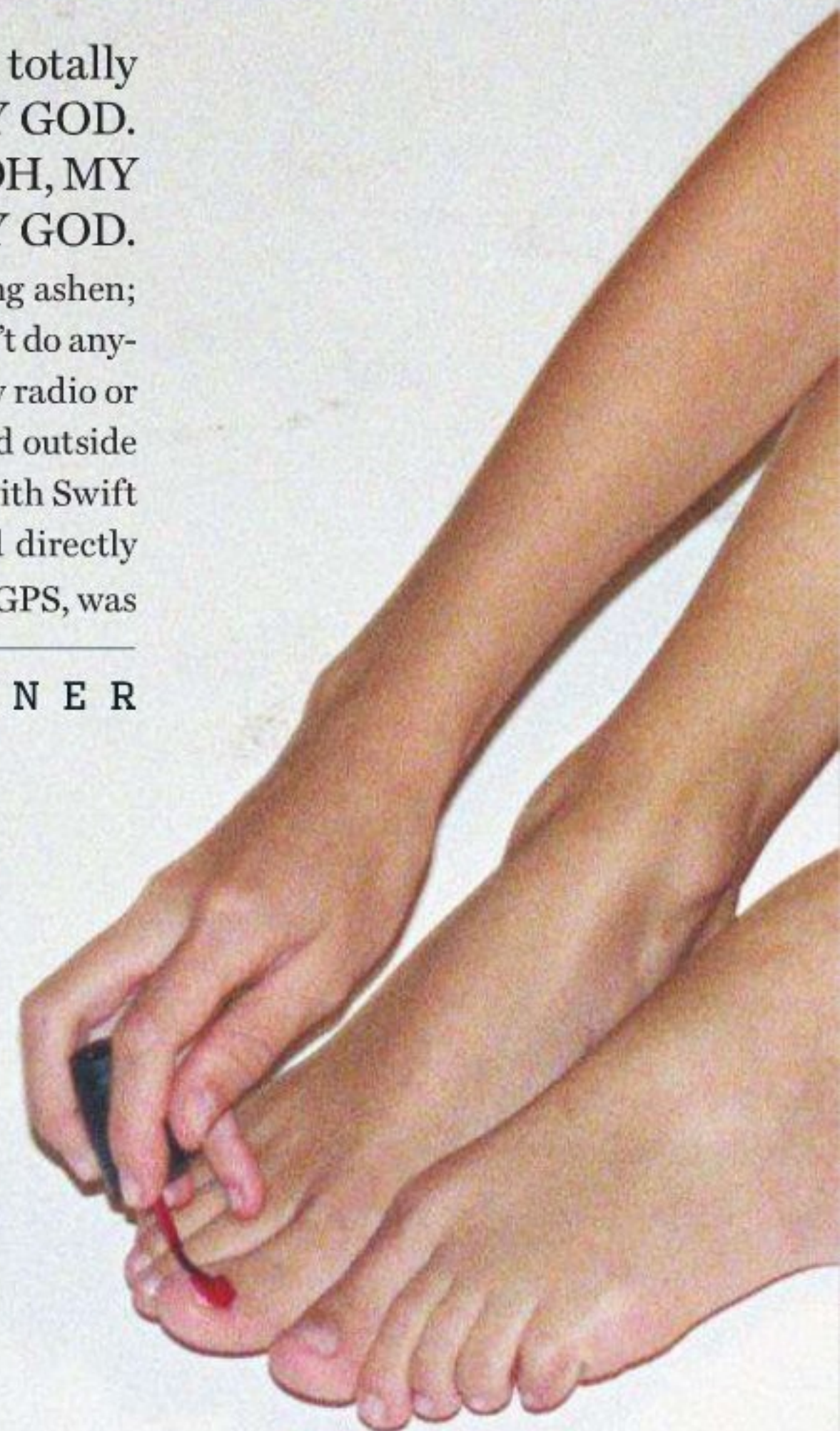
TAYLOR

in Wonderland

THE RECKLESS HEART,
RESTLESS NIGHTS AND
LOVABLE QUIRKS OF POP'S
UNSTOPPABLE PRINCESS
BY BRIAN HIATT

This is what it sounds like when Taylor Swift totally loses it: “Oh, my God. OH, MY GOD. OH, MY GOD. OH, MY GOD. OH, MY GOD. OH, MY GOD. OH, MY GOD. OH, MY GOD. OH, MY GOD. OH, MY GOD. OH, MY GOD. OH, MY GOD. OH, MY GOD.” * Her summer tan is turning ashen; her very blue eyes are practically pinwheeling with panic. But she didn’t do anything *that* bad just now, didn’t start a nuclear war or curse on country radio or upload her new album to BitTorrent: We’re on a bleak industrial road outside a Nashville rehearsal studio one stiflingly hot late-August evening, with Swift behind the wheel of her black Toyota SUV – which she just backed directly into a parked car. * She’s never learned how to use her SUV’s built-in GPS, was

P H O T O G R A P H S B Y T H E O W E N N E R





TAYLOR SWIFT

messing with Yelp and Google Maps on her iPhone instead, realized she was going the wrong way, started to turn around, still clutching the phone, and...*crunch*.

"Oh, my God," she repeats, pausing for air. She takes another look at the car she hit. "Oh, is that my bass player?"

It totally is. "It's fine, it's my bass player!" She couldn't look more relieved if she had received a death-row pardon. Popping out of the SUV, she apologizes to her bemused employee, a Ben Stiller look-alike named Amos Heller, who had been walking toward his now slightly dented car. "I'm gonna pay for it, I promise! I'm good for it! Oh, my God, Amos, I'm so sorry. I freaked out 'cause I went the wrong way and he was gonna think I'm a bad driver and then I backed into another car. This is the worst interview he's ever had, already!"

One of her security guys, who was supposed to be discreetly trailing us, gets out of his own SUV, looking shaken: "You OK?" Soon enough, we resume our journey to a local restaurant, this time with Swift following her bodyguard, who's serving as a human GPS at her behest. Problem solved.

Swift is still recovering for the whole 10-minute drive. "I cannot believe there was a car behind me. I thought that – because I could only see the security car, and Amos' car was so low and I didn't look in the back camera and I was *so* sure no one was behind me and..."

Watch her segment of MTV's *Punk'd*, where Justin Bieber goads Swift into setting off fireworks from a waterfront balcony – then makes her think that they started a huge fire on a nearby boat: Her face betrays the same *ohmygodohmygod* terror. "You know I had serious nightmares where I'd wake up in the middle of the night for, like, three weeks after that? I really thought that was it for me. I was thinking, 'Justin is 17, so he's going to juvie, but I'm going to big-girl prison.'"

She nearly made it all into a self-fulfilling prophecy during her performance at the 2010 Grammys, when stage fright knocked her voice flat during an awkward duet with Stevie Nicks on "Rhiannon." Nonfans were instantly, and unfairly, convinced that she was an Auto-Tune baby who can't sing live. "I had a bad night," says Swift, who's since refocused on vocal lessons. "It's one of those things where you've rehearsed over and over and when the camera turns on, the nerves kick in and you just can't think straight."

Mostly, though, it's been a smooth ride, with so few speed bumps she could practically tick them off on crimson-tipped fingers: She was terrible at fourth-grade soccer, couldn't parlay her height into basketball glory, never managed to do a split, had a hard time with math. There were some mean middle school girls, and more recently, as you may have heard, a few totally exhausting boyfriends. She has that

They were driving, as Swift later puts it, like they had just robbed a bank.

"OK, that was my life flashing before my eyes," she says, voice trembling. "What is this day? This is some strange alternate reality where things just go wrong a lot. That was the second time today! I'm going to have a nervous breakdown!" Her phone rings – it's her poor security bro, who sounds like he's already had one.



HERE IS A POND, COMPLETE with koi fish, in the middle of Swift's astonishing, many-colored Nashville condo. It sits beneath a wrought-metal spiral staircase leading to a human-size birdcage that faces floor-to-ceiling windows, with a view stretching to the green mountains beyond downtown. ("It's the most comfortable place in the world," she says of the wooden cage, built from a sketch she made. "It's just, like, pillows and comfiness.")

Under the previous owner, this was an ultramodern bachelor pad. Over 18 months of remodeling, Swift gave the condo a sex change and a heavy dose of well-funded OCD whimsy. The ceiling is arranged in multiple motifs – billowing curtains here, a painted indigo night sky there. In one corner, under hanging crystalline stars, sits a giant bunny made of moss. He's wearing a hat. "It's a whole *Peter Pan*, *Alice in Wonderland* structure here," she says, welcoming me the next morning. "It's what the inside of my brain looks like, essentially."

On the custom-built walls – some brick, some purple-wallpapered – are an endless array of photographs in ornate gold frames, some with matching gold-cursive captions: Swift with her high school friend Abigail (complete with lyrics from "Fifteen," in which said friend gave a boy "everything she had"); Swift with James Taylor; Swift making that heart-hand-symbol thing with buddy and Bieber-*fräulein* Selena Gomez. Above the fireplace, which is emblazoned with a small heart, there's even a photo of the moment Kanye stormed her VMA stage (captioned, "Life is full of little interruptions," a phrase that's also in the liner notes of her last album), right next to what is presumably the actual award in question under glass.

The place is immaculate, and there's no sign that any other living thing – besides her unusually friendly Scottish fold cat, Meredith (named after a favorite *Grey's Anatomy* character) – has been here recently. But a gossip item circulating that morning suggests otherwise: As the story goes, she missed her boyfriend, 18-year-old Conor Kennedy – an incoming prep-school senior – so she "kidnapped" him, via private jet, flying him to Nashville.

Swift stopped reading her own press after the Grammy incident, and instituted a self-Googleing ban. "What did I do?

SHE HAS A RECURRING DREAM WHERE SHE'S GETTING ARRESTED: "I TRY TO TELL THEM I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING, AND THEY WON'T LISTEN."

The moment she crashed, she pictured herself being taken away in handcuffs, sitting in jail in her blue polka-dot shirt-dress. "I have a lot of anxieties that end in me being put into a police car," she says, ponytail bobbing as she shakes her head. "I am so, like, rules, and not getting into accidents. So this is perfect."

At 22, Swift is always waiting for her luck to run out. This week, her new single, the irresistible, distinctly un-country "We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together," became her first Number One Hot 100 hit – and for all she knows, it could all be downhill from here. "I'm always terrified that, like, something's going to happen," she says, "and I'm not going to be able to do this anymore and it's gonna all end in one day. Part of the fear comes from loving this so much and not wanting to lose it."

Senior writer BRIAN HIATT wrote the "Breaking Bad" cover story in RS 1163.

slight overbite; at five feet 11, her posture isn't great. And yeah, there was that time Kanye West snatched her microphone and started yelling stuff about Beyoncé – still *so* not funny, as far she's concerned.

But she's come to understand that life – even hers – is unpredictable, uncontrollable. Messy. The Kanye episode helped her to "realize nothing is gonna go exactly the way that you plan it to," she says. "Just because you make a good plan, doesn't mean that's what's gonna happen."

Case in point: Later that evening, Swift is driving back from dinner, singing along to Third Eye Blind's "Never Let You Go" (which came out when she was nine) – when, unbelievably, we get into another car accident.

This one is random, terrifying and utterly not her fault. As Swift cruises down a four-lane street, what looks like an old Corvette blazes out of an intersection and veers into our lane – smacking the driver's side of Swift's SUV, then speeding off.



HIGH HOPES
"I don't have to
do too much to
shock people."

TAYLOR SWIFT

Don't tell me! Is it bad?" she says, clutching a pale-blue knitted pillow and curling her mile-long legs beneath her on a swiveling love seat. She's barefoot, wearing a V-neck white blouse and high-waisted, vintage-y floral shorts. Her knees have some fresh white scars on them ("I fell on rocks on the beach, and I fell during volleyball. Kind of eight-year-old-child injuries"). When she hears the day's gossip, her eyes widen under feline makeup. She looks faintly nauseated: "How did I kidnap him? You can't kidnap a grown man! These are serious accusations, now!"

She laughs, but she's swiveling furiously in the chair, like it might move her away from this topic. "It's an interesting way to spin something into a story," she says. "See, this is why I don't read stuff."

So is Conor chained to something upstairs, then? "What? God!"

She is aware of another recent rumor: that she and Kennedy crashed his cousin's wedding, then flatly refused to leave. "I have no idea what happened there," she says, spinning again, fidgeting with some chipped nail polish on her index finger. "I think that story was based on the biggest misunderstanding, 'cause I would never knowingly show up somewhere that I

with I-just-saw-the-Easter-Bunny joy. "I didn't really care to know what I was missing, and I knew it was illegal, and that my luck would be that I'd get caught. And then you think about all the moms and little girls who would have thought less of me. I'm still not much of a drinker, but I'll have a glass of wine every once in a while." And has she gotten drunk? "I'm not gonna talk about that! No one wants to picture that!"

It can't be easy, living like this. Gomez recalls going out to dinner with Swift when she noticed another patron eavesdropping. "She got startled that they were listening," Gomez says, "and she got nervous, and then the person left and she felt awful. She was like, 'I hope he didn't leave because of me. I hope he doesn't think I'm mean. Do you think he's going to tell everyone I'm mean?' She cares so much."

Swift has recurring anxiety dreams, and, predictably enough, one of them involves being arrested for something she didn't do. "I keep trying to tell them that I didn't do anything," she says, "and they won't listen, or my voice doesn't work."

Another one is quite vivid. "I'll be in a room with piles of clothes all over the floor, and I can't clean it. And no matter what, they keep piling up and I can't move. It

freaks me out! It makes me wish I could clean it, 'cause I love cleaning. But the piles get bigger, or there's piles on the ceiling, and I don't even know how that's possible."

She knows what that one's about. "I think I have a big fear of things spiraling out of control," she says. "Out of control and dangerous and reckless and thoughtless scares me, because people get hurt. When you say 'control freak' and 'OCD' and 'organized,' that suggests someone who's cold in nature, and I'm just not. Like, I'm really open when it comes to letting people in. But I just like my house to be neat, and I don't like to make big messes that would hurt people.... I don't want to let people down, or let myself down, or have a lot of people that I know I wronged."

Swift has never seen a therapist. "I just feel very sane," she says.

IT TAKES ONLY A CURSORY LISTEN to Swift's songs – or a visit to TMZ – to figure out the one part of her life where she allows messiness to reign. "The way I look at love is you have to follow it," she says, "and fall hard, if you fall hard. You have to forget about what everyone else thinks. It has to be an us-against-the-world mentality. You have to make it work by prioritizing it, and by falling in love really fast, without thinking too hard. If I think too hard about a relationship I'll talk myself out of it."

And why would she go from dating men in their 30s – John Mayer, Jake Gyllenhaal – to her current, SAT-prepping guy? "I have rules for a lot of areas of my life," she says. "Love is not going to be one of them."

Before she got together with Conor, she was publicly touting her interest in the Kennedy family's history, and had mentioned reading a 960-page book called *The Kennedy Women*. "Weird," she says. "Oh, my God, I know. It's like – things happen in my life in coincidental ways that are weird."

But it does look funny.... "You're telling me," she says. She looks comically aghast at the idea of Elvis superfan Nicolas Cage marrying Lisa Marie Presley – he got the ultimate collectible. "That's not what's happening," she practically yells, sending her eyes skyward.

It may also help that a friend did it first. Ask fellow minicougar Gomez if Swift got the idea from her relationship with Bieber (who's almost two years younger), and her answer is quick and cheerful: "Probably!"

Swift has written some of her generation's most seductively romantic songs – she may be the world's leading proponent of kissing in the rain. "I love the ending of a movie where two people end up together," says Swift, who further explores this theme on a new collaboration with Snow Patrol. "Preferably if there's rain and an airport or running or a confession of love."

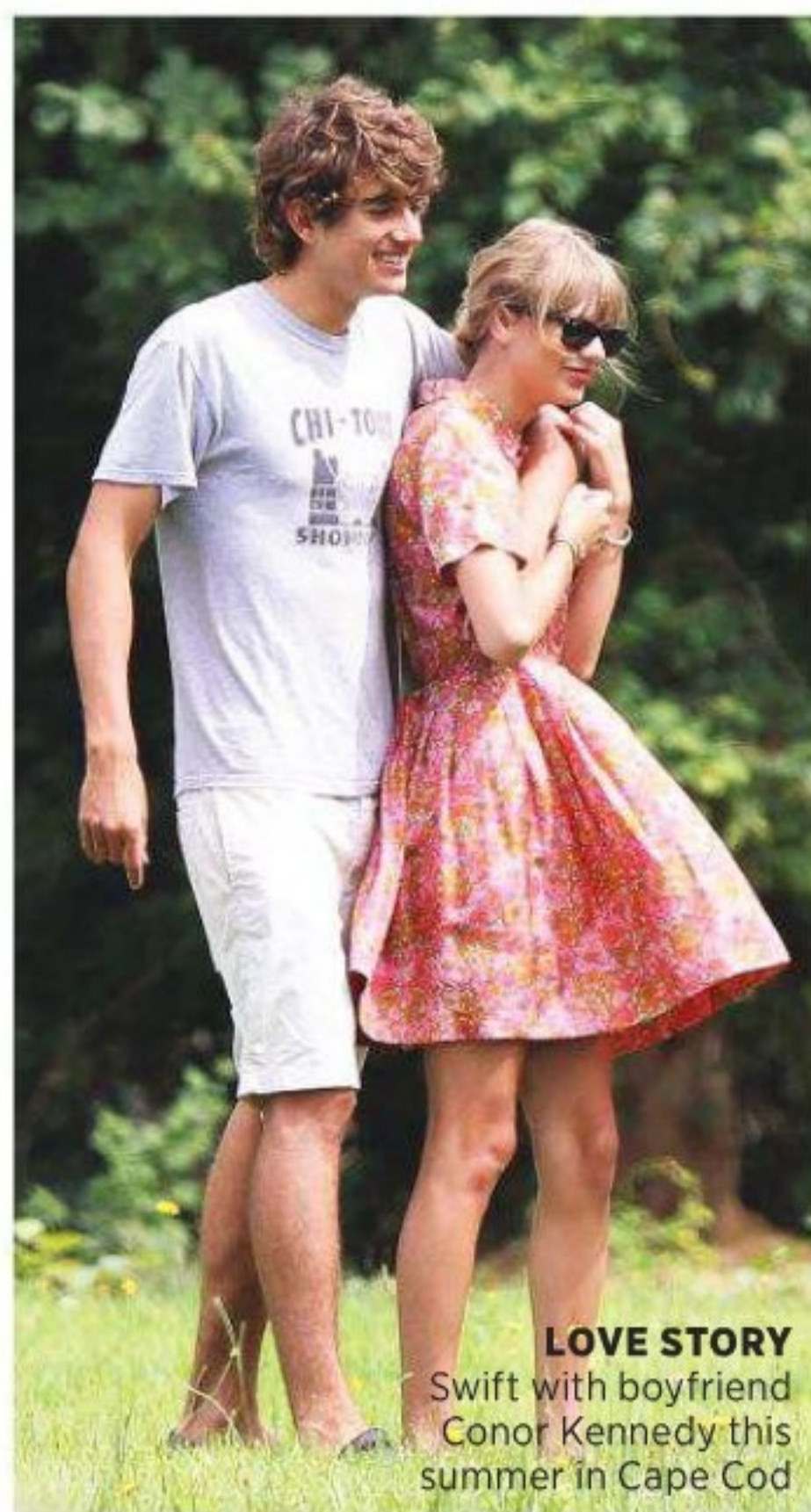
"I HAVE RULES FOR LIFE, BUT NOT FOR LOVE. IF I THINK TOO HARD ABOUT A RELATIONSHIP, I'LL TALK MYSELF OUT OF IT."

thought I wasn't invited to. And I would never want to upstage anybody."

She's come to grips, sort of, with the fact that her days of exclusively good press are over. "I just gotta take it day by day," she says. "I don't think anyone is ever truly viewed as only one thing, as only good, as only well-behaved, as only respectful. In the beginning, when there would be a tiny news story about something that wasn't true, I thought that meant my fans weren't gonna show up to my next concert. But now, knock on wood – where's wood? I need to knock on wood – I feel like my fans have my back and I have theirs."

And she knows that she can't always be the good guy. "It's just part of the dynamics of a good story," she says. "Everybody is a complicated character."

IT'S SOMEHOW NOT SURPRISING to learn that Swift had her first drink ever on her 21st birthday. "I knew I couldn't get away with it until then," she says the night before, sipping a Diet Coke through a little red straw that matches her lipstick. We made it into the restaurant without fuss, except for a pigtailed little girl who gaped



LOVE STORY

Swift with boyfriend Conor Kennedy this summer in Cape Cod



SPARKS FLY
At the VMAs
this year.
Lady Gaga
tweeted,
"Swift is
so cute."

She's also written breakup tunes that, in their own way, rival "Idiot Wind" for mercilessness. "Dear John," 2010's presumed John Mayer evisceration, may be the most brutal: "Don't you think nineteen's too young to be played by your dark, twisted games?" But the new album's "Trouble" comes close: "You never loved me or her or anyone," she sings.

"In every one of my relationships," she says, "I've been good and fair. What happens after they take that for granted is not my problem. Chances are if they're being written about in a way they don't like, it's because they hurt me really badly. Telling a story only works if you have characters in it. I don't think it's mean. I think it's mean to hurt someone in a relationship."

Mayer told *ROLLING STONE* that "Dear John" "really humiliated" him, and accused Swift of "cheap songwriting." When I first try to ask her about that over dinner, she literally presses her hands against her ears, saying, "Be kind, and don't tell me."

The next day, I'm unkind enough to relay Mayer's quotes, and she turns steely. "I didn't write his first and last name in the song! So that's him taking it on - when he had an album to promote."

But didn't she use his first name? "I didn't say anything about the person's identity. 'Dear John' is a well-known concept."

And why not just pick up the phone and tell these guys off directly? She looks at me

like I'm insane. "What's the fun in that?" ("She's so tough," says Gomez. "Sometimes she'll tell me, like, 'You should be a little mean sometimes.'")

In addition to heavy rom-com viewing (*Love Actually* is her favorite), Swift's daunting ideal of love comes from her maternal grandparents, who were married for 51 years, and died a week apart. "They were still madly in love with each other in their eighties," she says.

There are no mere hookups in Swiftland. "No," she says, nose wrinkling. "Where's the romance? Where's the magic in that? I'm just not that girl." And by the way, hackers shouldn't bother with her cellphone: "There's interesting things on there, like text messages," she says. "But you wouldn't find any naked pictures."

She's uncomfortable discussing a line from her new album - "I'll do anything you say if you say it with your hands" - that seems to break new ground. "I don't know if I'm interested in writing about, um, blatantly sexual things out of the context of how it affects a relationship," she says, then pauses. "Oh, I should just totally say that Dan thought of it," she adds, meaning co-writer Dan Wilson. "I could get myself off the hook so quick!"

Swift loves the idea of long relationships, though she's never really had one. "It usually lasts four and a half months, and then it all just disintegrates. Then I spend,

like, a year and a half mourning the loss of it."

Eventually, she would like to have a lot of kids: "Like, minimum, four," she says. "My fantasy has always been having a bunch of kids running around. I would love to become as dedicated a mom as my mom was." Which brings her to another recurring nightmare. "I have a kid and the paparazzi is taking pictures, and it's scaring my baby. And I know that I caused it, and I can't figure out how to stop it."

A FEW DAYS LATER, SWIFT IS sitting in a dressing room in MTV's New York studio, wearing a fluffy blue bathrobe and borrowed hotel slippers, talking business on her phone. Her two beauty coordinators are ministering to her wavy hair with a flatiron as she speaks. She waves me in, midconversation.

"I resent the idea that you can just start a sentence with 'respectfully' and then you can just say whatever you want," she says, sounding like someone with whom you wouldn't want to negotiate. "I don't understand how we resolve this - is it him giving points? Ah, OK, good call. Absolutely, if he calls me I'll tell him that. OK, cool. Mm-hmm. Yeah, respectfully." Instead of a manager, Swift has a management team, which she leads herself.

Her parents, Scott and Andrea, both have business backgrounds and have been involved in her career from the start. "I think my earliest memory is my mom would set up an easel in the kitchen when I was three," says Swift. "And she'd give me finger paints and I'd paint whatever I wanted, and it was always good enough."

"My mom would have conversations with me before I could talk," she says. "So I started talking really early." Her first word was 'yellow,' which had something to do with fellow tall creature Big Bird.

The rest is already a familiar story: She grew up on a Christmas-tree farm in rural Pennsylvania, became unaccountably obsessed with Shania Twain and the Dixie Chicks, started singing and writing songs, and by age 14, persuaded her parents to move near Nashville. They signed to a fledgling label called Big Machine Records, founded by a former Universal executive named Scott Borchetta. Swift's dad, a Merrill Lynch stockbroker, was a minor investor in the label, which was more of an idea than a company when they signed: "Scott Swift owns three percent of Big Machine," Borchetta says. "But I hear people go, 'Oh, well, he funded the whole deal, and that's why Taylor's Number One.' It's like, 'Please, people.' Everybody wants to say, 'Well, there's a reason.' Yeah, there is a reason. 'Cause she's great. That's the reason.'"

As she prepares to release her fourth album, *Red*, Swift is at the very center of pop - more than any other [Cont. on 80]

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DODGE DART

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LIST
2012

HOT BOND GIRL

Bérénice Marlohe

What does it take to be the next Bond girl? Well, you have to be off-the-charts smoking (duh). And it totally helps to be European. But for Bérénice Marlohe – who stars opposite Daniel Craig in November's *Skyfall* – the key was something dorkier: serious Google skills. The 33-year-old stunner, whose IMDb page was limited to a few French B movies, audaciously pitched *herself* for the part. “I spent two days looking for everybody I could find,” says the French actress, “down to the lighting and sound guys. Eventually I got the e-mail address of the casting director, and I sent in my reel.” After working with director Sam Mendes on *Skyfall*, she’s ready for a heavier role: “Like Heath Ledger in *Batman*. I just love craziness.” **ANDY GREENE**

HOT PRETTY THING

Ezra Miller

Meet Emma Watson's brilliant new onscreen foil: A queer, weed-taking wild child

Y

OU'D EXPECT ALL eyes to be on Emma Watson in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* – her first major post-*Potter* role. But

then 20-year-old actor Ezra Miller blasts onscreen and steals the whole thing. Directed by Stephen Chbosky (based on his own classic 1999 young-adult novel), *Perks* is the best, smartest high school movie in years – and Miller, playing Watson's gay stepbrother Patrick, is its anarchic heart. "The spirit of the story is the idea that if you can make it through the empty suburb or the traumatic experience, you can find a connection," says Miller. "But first you have to find that sort of deep camaraderie with your own damn self."

For Miller, movie high school was a lot more fun than the real thing. Growing up in New Jersey, he was teased for a speech impediment, and in his teens had a male friend betray him after they'd fooled around. (Miller describes his fluid sexuality as "queer.") "The thing is with these kids – none of them went to prom!" says Chbosky. "This film was their high school experience, and I wanted them to have the time of their lives."

Miller definitely did. Not only did he get busted for weed possession during the shoot, he also got to play out a childhood fantasy: shimmying and shaking across the stage as *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*'s Dr. Frank-N-Furter. "I really lost all sense of self in my homage to Tim Curry," says Miller. Chbosky adds, "Oh, he loved it. We couldn't pry that makeup off of him."

ERIKA BERLIN

GROOMING BY JAMES MOONEY AT ART DEPARTMENT

HOT NEW WEIRD AMERICA 'HERE COMES HONEY BOO BOO' // HOT OLD WEIRD AMERICA 'DANCING WITH THE STARS'

HOT BUMMER

Oral Sex Is No Longer Safe Sex

Brace yourselves: Drug-resistant super-gonorrhea is on its way

THE LIST OF THINGS we've had to learn to live without – polar ice caps, Bengal tigers, jobs that pay a living wage, the White Stripes – grows longer every day. But now things are *really* getting out of hand: According to *The New England Journal of Medicine*, the next thing they're taking away from us is blow jobs. A new strain of drug-resistant gonorrhea has gotten loose, and epidemiologists say it looks to be currently unstoppable. Though not as deadly as AIDS, gonorrhea spreads much more easily through oral sex, and brings with it a nasty brew of symptoms (urinary burning, painful swelling, truly disgusting pus) and terrifying long-term damage (sterility, increased HIV risk, blindness in children born to women who've contracted it).

Experts warn that the main defense against a full-on *Contagion*-style outbreak requires unlearning the notion that oral sex equals safe sex. "Unless there's a dramatic change, this will get worse before it gets better," says Harvard Medical School professor Jerome Groopman, who recently brought the crisis to public attention with a piece in *The New Yorker*. Groopman is most concerned because oral sex has come to be seen as normal – even trivial – among young people. "Changing sexual attitudes is tough," he says. "It's not like you have a public-service announcement on MTV and everything snaps into place."

JON DOLAN



TOP: CLAIRE FOLGER/WARNER BROS. PICTURES. ILLUSTRATION BY TODD DETWILER



HOT DIRECTOR

Affleck shooting *Argo*

Ben Affleck

After a wrong turn into Hollywood douchebaggery, he bounces back with the year's early Oscar favorite

BEN AFFLECK KNEW HE had to make a change the moment he saw his 2004 *ROLLING STONE* cover. "Those fucking David LaChapelle photos made me look like the mayor of West Hollywood during Rodeo Week," the actor and director says. "That was really emblematic of my life at that time. I'd allowed myself to turn into some person that I wasn't. I'm not this fucking guy. I would hate this guy. Why have I become this?"

It's an interesting question. Affleck's career, after catching fire instantly with *Good Will Hunting*, took a historic nose dive with the profoundly stupid *Daredevil* ("I understand what it's like to feel like an idiot in red sweatpants") and the *Ishtar*-level disaster of *Gigli*. And his romance with J.Lo turned his private life into a tabloid subplot: "This conventional wisdom set in that I had to apologize for being with Jennifer Lopez, which is a curious notion, you know?"

But somehow he weathered the bullshit, turned in a great performance in 2006's *Hollywoodland* and began directing strong, gritty movies – 2007's *Gone Baby Gone*, 2010's *The Town* – about the seedy underworld of his beloved Boston. And now, here he is today, married to Jenni-

fer Garner, with three kids and scoring all kinds of Best Director Oscar buzz for his latest movie, *Argo* – a tense, funny thriller based on a true story about how the CIA and Hollywood teamed up to produce a fake sci-fi movie to help rescue Americans trapped in Iran during the height of the late-1970s hostage crisis. "I didn't want to end up pigeonholed as the Boston crime guy, and *Argo* is such a broad palette," Affleck says. "It's a period movie. It's in California, D.C., Iran. It's current and relevant, and I got to stretch in a lot of directions." (Just don't go in expecting total historical accuracy: "It's obviously not a documentary; it's not even a docudrama," Affleck says. "We had to turn it into something that works as a story so that people would be interested enough to watch.")

The fact is, after a lot of soul-searching and some serious body blows, Affleck has become what he was supposed to be all those years ago: one of the most-talented dudes working in Hollywood. "I like the sense of responsibility of directing because you control every facet of the movie," Affleck says. "I like the opportunities that I'm getting. I feel like my work finally is getting judged on what it is. For people to take a look at what you're doing on its merit? That's a win in Hollywood. You know what I mean?"

SEAN WOODS

"I'd allowed myself to turn into some person I wasn't," Affleck says now.

//// HOT 'NO MAS' JACK WHITE AT RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL //// HOT NPR CONVENTION 'THE WALKING DEAD'



HOT SUPERSTAR STAND-UP

Kevin Hart

He sells out rooms from Detroit to Oslo, is in the market for a Ferrari and just hosted the VMAs. But even if he is his generation's Eddie Murphy, Kevin Hart isn't too cool to iron his own leather T-shirt

THAT WAS DISGUSTING," says Kevin Hart. The comedian is hunched over a high-limit blackjack table at Detroit's MGM Grand casino, where a curly-haired dealer named Alexis is mercilessly hoovering up Hart's chips. "She's on a heater!" cries Hart, and just like that, he's lost \$10,000. You might think 10 grand is nothing to a guy who's in town for a sold-out show at the 14,000-seat Palace Arena, a comic who pulls in a mind-blowing "\$400,000 to \$600,000" a gig. But for the 33-year-old – raised by a single mom in a one-bedroom North Philadelphia apartment, sharing with his brother a bunk bed wedged into the hallway – blowing that kind of money still comes with a little *agita*. "I'm sore, all of a sudden," Hart says, wincing as he gets up. "I was fine when I sat down. Now my hamstrings hurt!"

Hart's head of security, a soft-spoken hulk called Terry, maneuvers him through the casino floor. "You see some of the weirdest people in Detroit casinos," Hart says, flipping up his hood, stealth-style, and launching into a running commentary on the ambient despair, which could be the foundation of a future bit. That bald guy in jean shorts, staring at a slot machine, hand slapped to his forehead? "His life is in shambles right now." The fat guy in a golf shirt gesticulating to a security guard? "Begging for his money back," Hart notes, shaking his head.

His 2011 special, *Laugh at My Pain* (the movie earned \$8 million at the box office), exploded Hart into the top tier of stand-ups – with masterfully crafted, seriously funny bits about depressing subjects, like the sudden cancer death of his mother and his father's long-standing drug addiction. "That was me saying, 'I'm gonna go a different route,'" he says. "Some deep shit. Finding different levels as an artist."

We take an elevator to Hart's suite. He unfolds an ironing board and drapes a white leather T-shirt over it. "The day you stop doing the small things is the day you think you're above everybody else," he says. Hart's first comedy idol was Eddie Murphy. "Watching *Raw* and *Delirious* as a child, I was like, 'Wow, people fall at his feet,'" he recalls. By 16, he was an inveterate clown. "I was the guy on the swim team entertaining the bus on the way to the meets."

He enrolled as a theater major at a community college but dropped out "after a week and a half." He took happily to the

CPI SYNDICATION

HOT POLITICAL CLICHÉ THAT MUST GO AWAY **'DOG WHISTLE'** // HOT WELCOME BACK **D'ANGELO**

unglamorous life of a road comic. "It was six-hour drives to comedy clubs in East Bubbleshit, getting no money," he says. "I performed at a strip club in Atlantic City called Sweet Cheeks. I performed in a bowling alley while people were fucking bowling." The audiences kept getting bigger, and soon Hart was landing TV roles (he appeared on Judd Apatow's *Undeclared*) and movie appearances (he has a riotously unhinged turn in *Scary Movie 3*). But 2012 is the year that he proved his jokes would work on the widest possible audiences: Hart hosted the MTV Video Music Awards, and he's set to star opposite Seth Rogen in an upcoming buddy-cop spoof. "I went to Europe this year: London, Amsterdam, Oslo," Hart says. "My audience was heavy, heavy white. But I sold out every place."

Hart recently bought a mansion in the hills near L.A.'s Mulholland Park, and he collects cars: "A Mercedes SLS AMG, with the Batman doors. A '66 GTO. Right now, I wanna go Ferrari." None of this shows up in his new set,

"People don't want to hear about me having a gold toilet," says Hart.

titled *Let Me Explain* – which is mostly about his recent divorce. (He does have one joke about horseback riding, but mostly to mock the fact that his legs are too stubby to reach the stirrups.) "People don't want to hear about me having leather walls or gold toilets."

It's almost showtime. Hart leaves the hotel in an SUV, the leather shirt on a hanger next to him, and immediately faces a superstar problem: a traffic jam caused by his own audience. When he makes it to the Palace, he takes the stage to a booming Meek Mill track – the first bit of over-the-top showmanship in a set that also includes an entire Kiss concert's worth of lasers, smoke machines and pyrotechnics ("I'm the first comedian with fire!" he announces onstage with half-serious chutzpah). "People need this," the comedian says. "They need to laugh. I'm trying to do what Eddie Murphy did for his generation. You have to show people, 'I'm different. I'm not just a comedian.' I'm trying to become a rock star."

JONAH WEINER

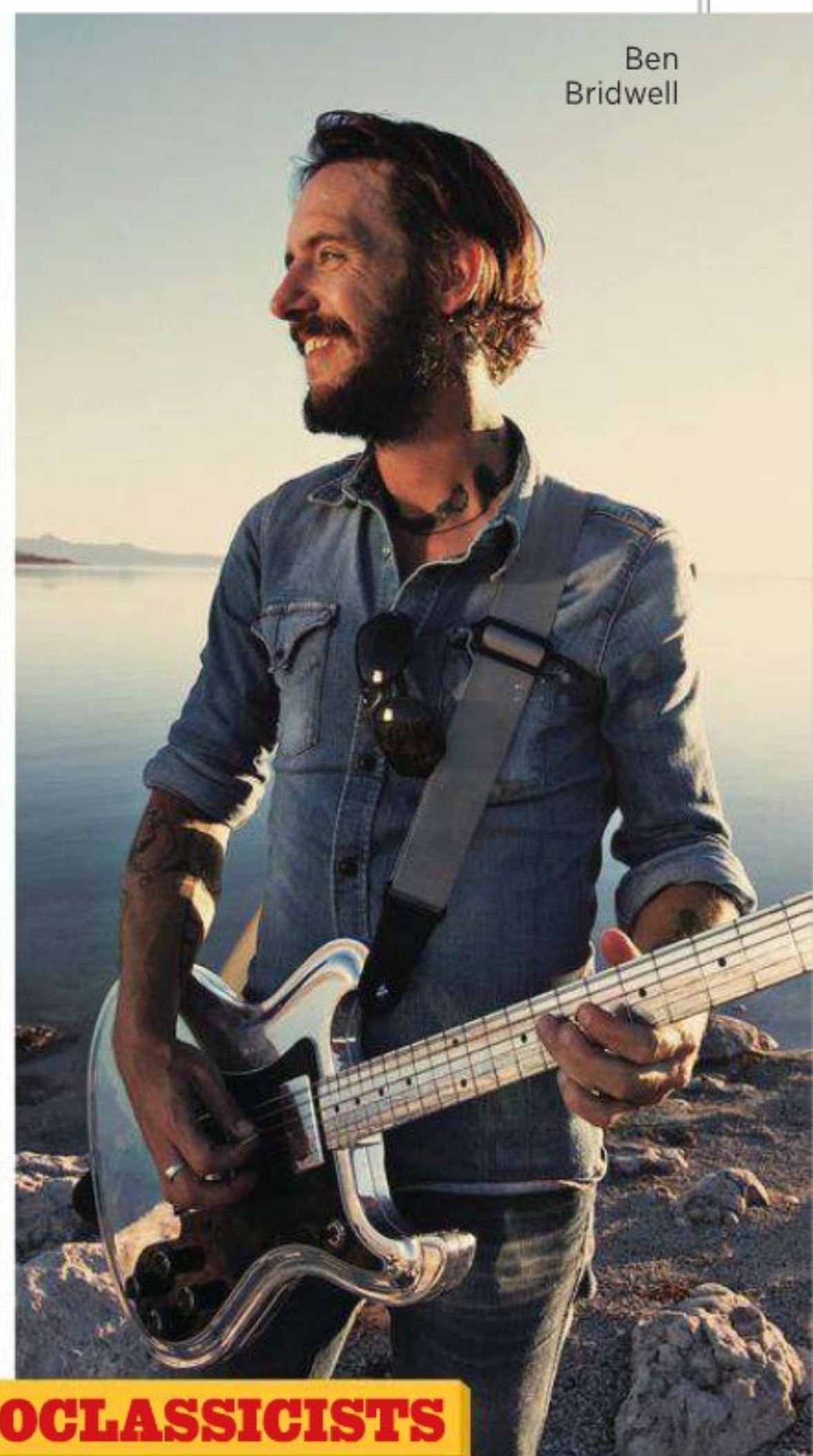
Band of Horses

Harmony-drenched indie crew teams up with old-school Stones producer for pretty, bold LP

THE DAY BAND OF HORSES started recording their fourth album in L.A. this past February, producer Glyn Johns – famed for his work with the Who, the Beatles and the Rolling Stones – asked frontman Ben Bridwell to play some new material on acoustic guitar for his bandmates. "I had never done that before, ever," Bridwell says. "It was terrifying. All your frailties are on display amongst your closest friends and the most legendary producer that's ever walked the Earth." But the method definitely worked: "A few days later, I was playing basketball out in the courtyard, and I heard the playback. I actually thought someone was playing a Neil Young record. When I got closer, I was like, 'Oh, shit, it's me.'"

Johns – who fell in love with Band of Horses' sound after seeing them live last year – brought tried-and-true studio techniques to the sessions. "My methods haven't changed in the least," says the producer. "I still mix to quarter-inch tape, and if there's any editing to be done, I'll do it with a razor blade." The result is the killer, seriously vintage-sounding *Mirage Rock* – a raw, eclectic disc, ranging from the pure Southern California harmonies of "Slow Cruel Hands of Time" to "Dumpster World," which builds from an acoustic hymn into a fuzz-drenched frenzy with Bridwell howling about drugs and anarchy.

Bridwell has come a long way since the late Nineties, when he was homeless – or even the period when he was writing



Ben Bridwell

HOT NEOCLASSICISTS

the band's 2010 major-label debut, *Infinite Arms*, when he was struggling with drinking and drugs. Today, the singer lives with his wife and kids in a South Carolina suburb. "I'd love to destroy my body all the time," Bridwell says with a laugh. "Unfortunately, I can't."

PATRICK DOYLE

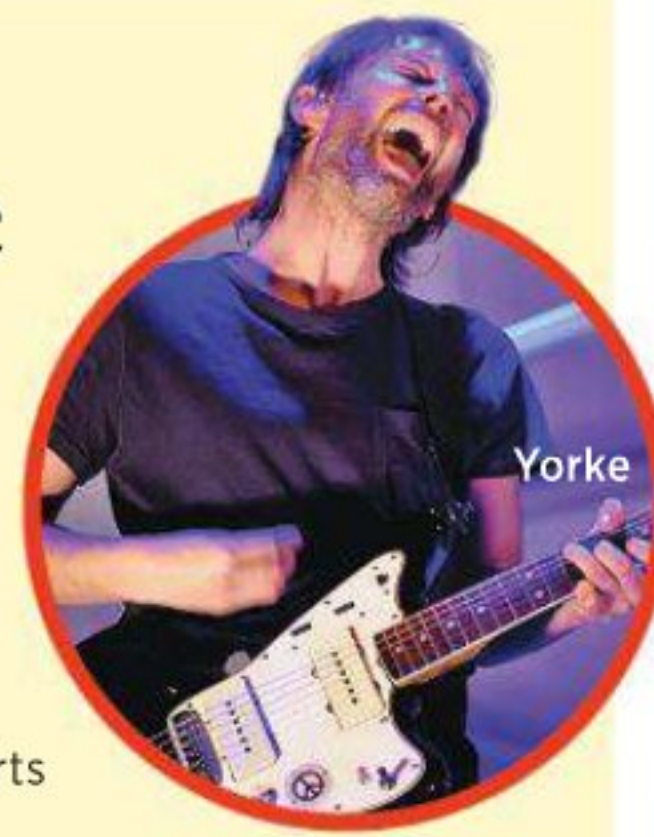
HOT SUPERGROUP

Atoms for Peace

Thom Yorke gets even weirder with Flea

When Radiohead frontman Thom Yorke recruited Red Hot Chili Peppers bassist Flea and a few other buddies to back him on a tour in 2009, no one expected them to make an album. Which is why we're so pumped for Atoms for Peace's LP (due out next

year), which is packed with some of Yorke's prettiest, blepiest songs ever. Says Yorke, "We were excited about ending up with a record where you weren't quite sure where the human starts and the machine ends."



Sidney (left) and
Thurman Sewell
in New York



HOT DOUBLE TROUBLE

The ATL Twins

*They share a bed and are in a movie with Selena Gomez.
Is Hollywood ready for the weirdest brother act of all time?*

ON A LATE-SUMMER AFTER-noon in New York, identical twins Sidney and Thurman Sewell are lying on their bed in the Standard Hotel, wearing nothing but boxers and gold grills on their teeth. As they take swigs from a bottle of Grey

Goose, the only thing between them is a completely naked girl they've been partying with since the night before. It's just another day in the supremely strange life of the ATL Twins: 25-year-old skateboarders who sleep in the same bed, fuck the same women and share *everything*—from

the mirror-image tattoos that cover their arms to the *Penthouse* Pet they were both engaged to for four years, until her parents got too freaked out. "It's like we're one person in two bodies," they say, speaking (as they often do) in unison.

Next spring, the world will get to meet the twins when they make their acting debut alongside James Franco and Selena Gomez in Harmony Korine's hyperbuzzed college movie *Spring Breakers*. "Harmony told us, 'Fuck with me and your stock will go up,'" says Sidney. "Somehow

HOT THE MOST INTERESTING MAN IN THE WORLD **BILL CLINTON** // HOT KENNEY JONES-ERA WHO **'THE OFFICE'**



TOP RIGHT: CHRISTOPHER DILTS FOR OBAMA FOR AMERICA

every director, producer, Warner Brothers asshole got our number and was hitting us up."

Born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and raised in Atlanta, the twins stopped showing up to school in eighth grade. "We grew up in a real shithole straight out of [Korine's 1997 movie] *Gummo*," Thurman says. "Then we just started hustling." These days, the twins work in the office of a personal-injury attorney in Atlanta – but that's temporary. "We just want to make a lot of money and fuck bitches," says Thurman. Adds Sidney, "We want to be as big as Justin Bieber!"

GUS WENNER

HOT FIELD GENERAL

Jeremy Bird

The Obama campaign's secret weapon is a 34-year-old former divinity student who knows how to get people to vote

MOST CAMPAIGNS GO to war with the electorate they've got. The Obama re-election machine is marching into November with an electorate it has reshaped to its liking – under the command of Jeremy Bird, the campaign's 34-year-old national field director.

Four years ago, Bird helped engineer victory for Obama by registering new voters and dragging them to the polls in record numbers. "We won North Carolina by 14,000 votes because we expanded the electorate," he says. This time around, Bird has vowed the campaign's ground game will "make our organizing in 2008 look like minor-league baseball." The campaign has invested heavily in Bird's grassroots infrastructure – and in Bird himself, whose bimonthly \$5,284 paycheck is fatter than campaign manager Jim Messina's, Federal Election Commission filings show. That bet is paying off: In September, the campaign announced it had already signed up more than 1 million new voters – topping the total registered in all of 2008. Obama has made 44 million voter contacts this year – close to twice Romney's tally – and boasts a huge advantage in field offices. Those paid offices, in turn, oversee a network of highly trained volunteers who operate from their homes, equipped with all the technology they need to turn out their neighbors on Election Day.

In short, Bird has built a massive army of staff and grassroots volunteers for which Romney has no answer. That's no small feat for someone who grew up in a trailer park in Missouri. Tall and charismatic, with horn-rimmed glasses and an infectious smile, Bird hails from a Southern Baptist family and earned a divinity degree from Harvard before turning to organizing.



Bird on the campaign trail

His Harvard mentor – former Cesar Chavez deputy Marshall Ganz – says Bird carried his religious training into politics, treating it as "a secular mission."

That background made Bird an ideal fit for the 2008 campaign, when voters saw Obama as a Democratic messiah. This time around, Bird has helped close the "enthusiasm gap" of Democratic voters who just a year ago appeared disillusioned with Obama. In contrast to the Washington insider Messina, Bird is a true progressive who cut his teeth on the Howard Dean campaign and went on to direct field organizing for Wake Up Wal-Mart, a national effort to force the retailer to pay a living wage.

These days, when he's not riding herd on his deputies or leading conference calls with neighborhood team leaders, Bird still finds time to get out in the field. During a recent trip to Nevada, he helped man the phone banks. "I'm 2-for-2 on volunteer recruitment calls in East Vegas office," he boasted to his Chicago colleagues via Twitter. "Still got it."

TIM DICKINSON

OBAMA'S EDGE

How Bird's machine is crushing the Romney campaign

VOTER CONTACTS

Obama 44 million
Romney 26 million

NUMBER OF FIELD OFFICES

Obama 551
Romney 254

Riff Raff

Meet Diplo's favorite new rapper – an Internet-created oddball who wears a snake as a bracelet



HOT MC

T

TO GET A SENSE OF how the awesomely anarchic rapper Riff Raff pushes familiar hip-hop tropes into circus-sideshow-performance-art overdrive, just check out his “Versace Python Freestyle” video. Yes, that is a fake-gold hundred-dollar bill sitting on top of actual hundred-dollar bills. Yes, those are rails of white powder arrayed in front of a cheapo laptop. And yes, that is a live snake, which he likes to wear around his wrist as a bracelet. “I just

do me – it’s not a joke, it’s 100 percent A-game,” Riff Raff says by phone from his Los Angeles home, where he’s sitting next to a “\$5,000 all-leather California King bed.” “It’s like if you saw the Loch Ness Monster. How are you gonna categorize it? Are you gonna call it a reptile? Are you gonna call it a mammal? Are you going to say it doesn’t exist?”

Riff Raff rose to (semi-) prominence as a jubilantly goofy contestant on the short-lived MTV reality show *From G’s to Gents*, but he broke through to cult-hero status by uploading a string of off-kilter hip-hop tracks that swirl together bizarre koans (“My sandals are perpendicular”) and nagging catchphrases (“Bring the rice out,” a reference to both wedding-style merry-making and cocaine, has become a familiar chant at his concerts). On the strength of these tracks, Diplo signed him: The mixtape *Birth of an Icon* is an introductory sampler, and a full-length debut is up next. Along with Internet-fueled MCs like Kitty Pryde, Lil B and Chief Keef, Riff Raff is emblematic of what you might call Web rap: His image (especially the flowing brown hair he’s constantly brushing) is at least as important as his music. “With the hair, it’s got to be really maintained, like a horse mane,” he says. “You want to keep it real luscious and vivacious and full of cluster.” Does he mean luster? “No, no, cluster. Like diamond clusters. You want to keep your hair like a cluster of diamonds. Throw some glitter in there, some shine and sheen. You want to have a real Charlie Sheen aspect, you know, some conglomerate birthday-cake hair.”

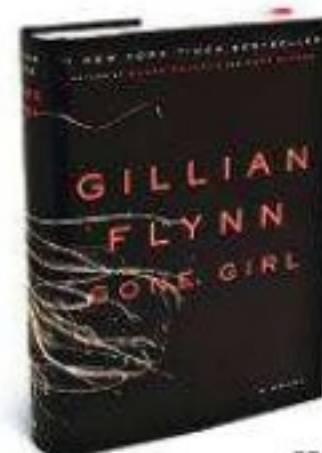
JONAH WEINER



HOT AUTHOR

Gillian Flynn

How did this nice young woman write 2012’s most chilling thriller?



“I LOVE UNRELIABLE narrators,” says former entertainment reporter Gillian Flynn,

whose critically acclaimed thriller, *Gone Girl*, has dominated bestseller lists since the summer, selling more than 1.5 million copies. “I love that cold, thick feeling you get in your belly when you’re 30 pages in and starting to think, ‘Oh, I’ve been trusting this person and I shouldn’t be.’”

In *Gone Girl*, the protagonists – Amy, who goes missing, and husband Nick, who’s presumed guilty – are journalists who move to Nick’s Missouri hometown after they’re laid off from their magazine jobs. This is an area where Flynn has some experience. After years as a critic at *Entertainment Weekly*, she ended up back in the Midwest, where Flynn has set all three of her novels – which are packed with enough psychological insight to make them the perfect antidote to Nancy Grace. “I’ve always tended to get overly involved in certain cases,” Flynn says of cable-fueled media circuses. “But I also try to make sure I’m aware of where to draw the line.”

ANN FRIEDMAN

FROM LEFT: CHELSEY CROUCHER; HEIDI JO BRADY

HOT ANNOYINGLY FUNCTIONAL COUPLE **KIM AND KANYE** // HOT NEXT ZOMBIES (WE HOPE) **MUMMIES**

HOT MEDIUM

REVENGE OF THE PODCASTS

Surprise! Marc Maron isn't the only podcaster out there – here's the best of the rest in the medium that's recapturing the excitement of free-form radio



The Adam Carolla Podcast

FORMAT

A mix of random chatter and interviews, it's the most downloaded podcast ever: The *Love-line* sidekick started recording it from his couch after losing a syndicated radio show.

STYLE

Loose, foulmouthed, ultra-bro-y. He talks porn with Jimmy Kimmel, disses Coldplay with Seth MacFarlane and debates the best ways to die with Bryan Cranston.

HIGHLIGHT

Carolla is a dark dude. "When people say to me, 'CBS has decided to make your sitcom,' my first thought is, 'We're all going to be dead in 40 years.' Then I say, 'Yes, that's awesome.'"



Here's the Thing With Alec Baldwin

Baldwin does his own version of *Inside the Actors Studio*, walking A-list pals – Lorne Michaels, Billy Joel, Chris Rock, David Letterman – through career ups and downs.

As genteel and insider-y as a Hamptons cocktail party. But Baldwin does his homework, getting Joel to talk about depression and Rock to spill about friends who bug him for cash.

Letterman fears his show is repetitive. "We're just building the same car over and over again. In the old days we'd be up all night shooting – I can't do that show anymore."



Comedy Bang Bang

On former *Mr. Show* writer Scott Aukerman's weekly show, both big-name (Amy Poehler) and cult-fave comedians (Paul F. Tompkins) drop in for totally deranged interviews.

Manic, nerdy, crazily high-concept. Every interview is eventually interrupted by a comedian in character: Andy Samberg, for one, had to contend with a fake-rasta drug dealer.

"Would You Rather?" – a game at the end of each show where guests are asked questions like, "Would you rather live in a porta-potty or get 100 mosquito bites daily?"



Elvis Mitchell's The Treatment

Eccentric former *New York Times* and NPR critic Mitchell talks filmmaking with guests including Wes Anderson, Lena Dunham, Steven Soderbergh and Francis Ford Coppola.

Postgraduate seminar with a stoner professor: Mitchell geeks out with Harvey Weinstein over the 1970 film *Borsolino*, defends *Pootie Tang* with its writer-director, Louis C.K.

A secret to *Louie*'s success: "If you want the audience to connect with a character, give them time alone with them, because then they're not spectators anymore."

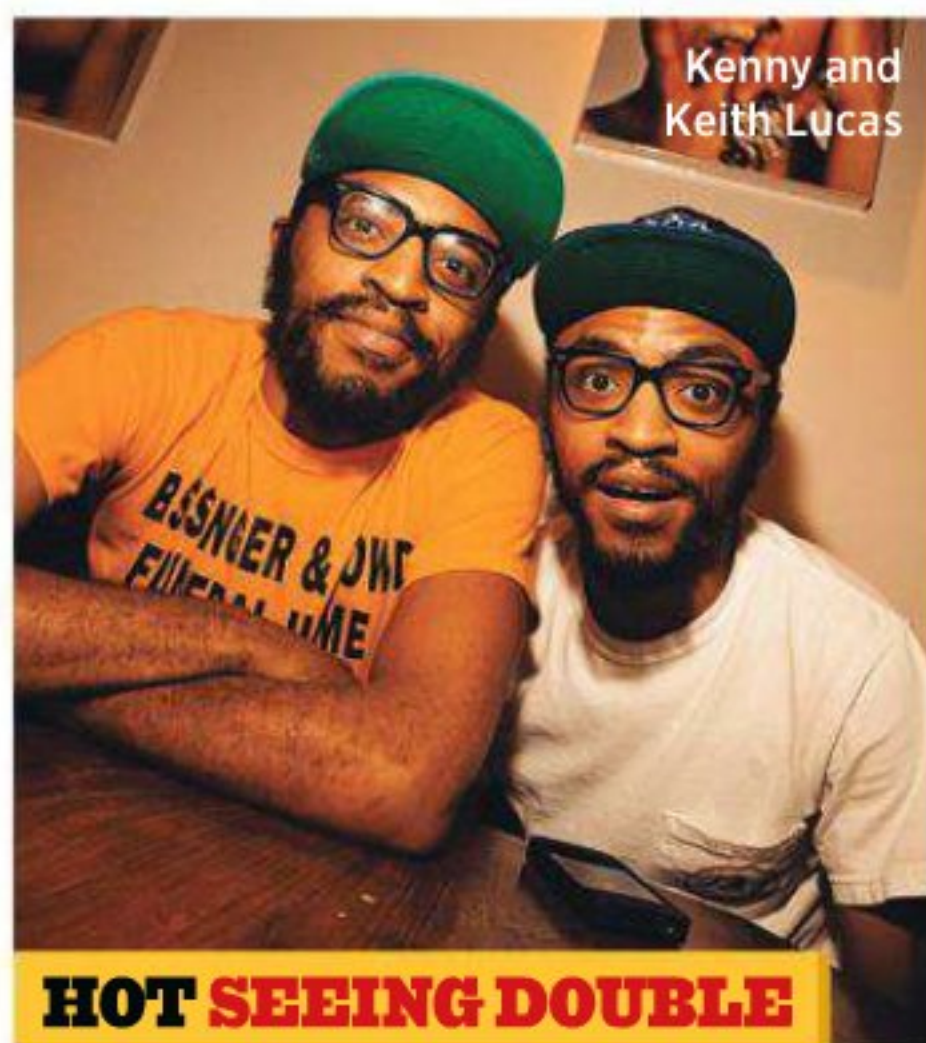


Judge John Hodgman

Hodgman plays a no-nonsense judge ruling on real people's mundane problems, like the husband who wants to stop his wife from raising chickens in their backyard.

Like Judge Judy on quaaludes. The show is set up as a mock trial, complete with testimony, cross-examination and Hodgman's word-of-God final judgment.

After a guest offers testimony complaining about a friend who texts instead of talking with her, Hodgman interrupts: "Sorry, what did you say? I was texting."



Kenny and Keith Lucas

HOT SEEING DOUBLE

Lucas Brothers

Twin New York comics – and law school dropouts – double the funny

BEFORE THEY WERE OPENING for Sarah Silverman and killing on *Fallon*, Keith and Kenny Lucas, 26, were twin second-year law students with a habit of dressing alike and finishing each other's thoughts. "I hated law school," Kenny says. "I wanted to try different things, so I went to a comedy open mic." Keith: "I was skeptical, but Kenny started going in pretty hard, so I said, 'Let's do it.'" The brothers, who grew up worshipping Chris Rock and Jerry Seinfeld,

dropped out and quickly became a draw on the New York stand-up circuit. Achieving mind-meld while rocking identical glasses and beards, they tag-team deadpan jokes about twindom: In one bit, when a guy asks for Doublemint gum, they indignantly imagine him "going up to a white baby and asking for E*Trade stock advice." They're in talks with Fox and Comedy Central, but right now they're happy to just be working and sharing a place in Brooklyn. "The crib is pretty dope," Keith says. Kenny adds, "It has an Xbox."

JONAH WEINER



UCKED INTO THE corner of a downtown Manhattan cafe in a gray hoodie and flip-flops, clutching a venti Starbucks cup with her name scribbled on it,

Eve Hewson could be any NYU coed taking a study break – except for two things. One, the 21-year-old drama student is starring in a new movie opposite Sean Penn. And two, Memphis Eve Sunnyday Iris Hewson, better known as Eve, also happens to be the daughter of one Paul David Hewson – better known as Bono.

“I feel like I should be constantly defending me, like I’m my own person,” she says before ordering scrambled eggs and a drink called a Salty Dog. “But at the end of the day, that is me. I mean, I definitely have his genes in the going-out department,” she adds, smiling. “It’s kind of dangerous.” (Example, please? “Last night I went to see *Finding Nemo 3D*. If you’re a stoner, that’s pretty fun.”)

Hewson walked here straight from class – Producing Essentials, one of the last she needs to finish before graduating early in December. (She’s minoring in child psychology.) She used to live down the block from here, until a mice infestation forced her across town, where she now lives with a roommate, her best friend from growing up in Ireland. She’s hoping to move to L.A. after graduation – she recently got her driver’s license – but “I just have to convince my parents to get me a car.” She’s optimistic, though: “I’ve been saving up. Two Christmas presents, two birthday presents and my graduation present. That should be enough!”

As the second-oldest of Bono’s four kids, there were some obvious perks to her upbringing. “It’s funny, because life felt so normal to us, but then again, we were teenage girls,” she says. “So we were like, ‘Who’s that guy? Dad, go talk to him so we can meet him.’” They met Kings of Leon that way. It’s also how she had what she calls “the greatest moment probably of my life,” meeting one Beyoncé Knowles. “I was in a pool with my friend Blue [daughter of the Edge], and we just went underwater and screamed, and then got out of the pool and hid. So that’s when we used Dad. To get cute boys and Beyoncé.”

Otherwise, Hewson grew up about as normally as one could expect of the daughter of a rock messiah: tennis, guitar, piano, French lessons. (“I was pretty excited for most of them,” she says, “except the viola. I still hate Tuesdays.”) In elementary school, she and two friends started a band



HOT ROCK PROGENY

Eve Hewson

Bono’s daughter lands killer job while still in college – a starring role opposite Sean Penn

they called Ten Past Two, after the time school let out. But by high school she’d decided to focus on acting instead. “When I told my dad, he was like, ‘I don’t want you to!’” Hewson says, rolling her eyes. “I was like, ‘What the hell? You of all people can’t tell me that. You didn’t listen to whoever told you that when you were 18! So you’re just gonna have to deal with it.’”

When she auditioned for her spot at NYU, she was so nervous she “puked for

six hours.” But now she’s auditioned puke-free for some choice Hollywood roles – including Alice in Tim Burton’s *Alice in Wonderland* – and has her first big credit in *This Must Be the Place*, where she plays a surrogate daughter to Penn’s depressed Eighties rock star living outside Dublin. “Everyone says, ‘Oh, so it’s your dad,’ but it’s *so* not,” Hewson says. “My dad wishes he was brave enough to wear red lipstick.”

JOSH EELLS

STYLING BY ISABEL DUPRE AT THE WALL GROUP. HAIR BY DENNIS LANNI USING ORIBE AT ART DEPARTMENT. MAKEUP BY DEVRA KINERY USING NARS COSMETICS AT ART DEPARTMENT. TANK TOP BY BESS. JACKET BY PROENZA. JEANS BY RALPH LAUREN.

HOT JEFFERSON STARSHIP **SNOOP LION** // HOT WWF CAGE MATCH **NICKI MINAJ VS. MARIAH CAREY**

HOT POP ART



Richard Phillips

Pop artist Richard Phillips has become famous making huge, striking oil paintings out of paparazzi shots of Taylor Swift, Sasha Grey and – especially – his muse, Lindsay Lohan. (Phillips' Lohan-themed art, which also includes a short film, is showing at New York's Gagosian Gallery.) "She's this embodiment of beauty and complexity," says Phillips, whose paintings regularly auction for six-figure prices. "Her life is under this pressure of focus. There's a reason she's portrayed Marilyn and Liz Taylor – that's no coincidence."

JANE C. TIMM

HOT ACTOR

John Hawkes

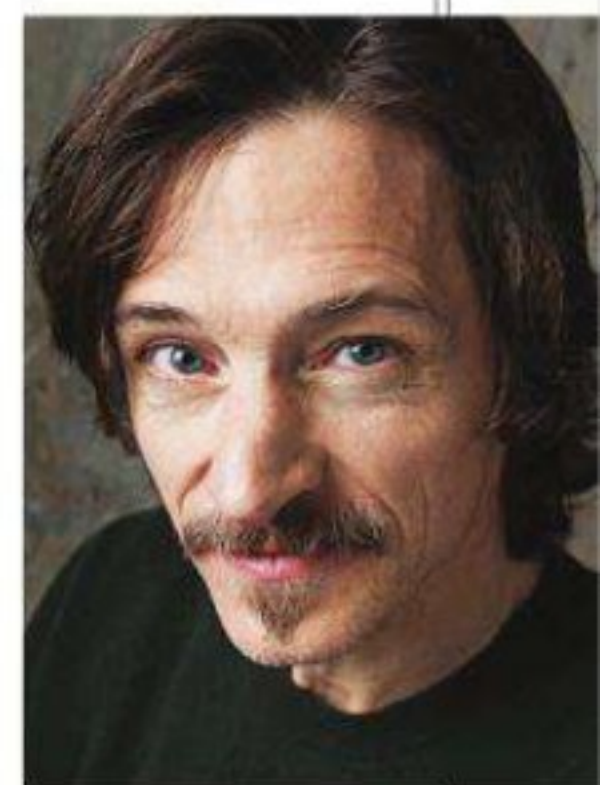
Hollywood outlier should get second chance at meeting Oscar

EATING EGGS IN A DINER near his L.A. home, John Hawkes considers how an actor with a talent for playing riveting low-lives ended up in Hollywood at age 53. "I just blew into town," he says with a shrug. "Twenty-three years ago."

In 2010's *Winter's Bone*, Hawkes played a meth addict with such intensity that he earned an Oscar nomination. It's widely expected that he'll be nominated again this year for his horizontal role in *The Sessions* as polio sufferer Mark O'Brien. Displaying the gifts that make him the indie world's answer to Daniel Day-Lewis, Hawkes finds the poetry and sexuality of a man inside an iron lung.

"There's a power in John's look," says Danny McBride, who cast Hawkes as his sad-sack brother in the HBO series *Eastbound & Down*. "He really transforms. I feel sorry for him in *Eastbound*, but in *Winter's Bone*, he scares me shitless."

Some of that ability to transform stems from Hawkes' knock-around past: like playing in punk bands or his hitchhiking adventures three decades ago, when he made his way from Texas back home to Minnesota. He picked up rides from a lineup of characters that felt like an array of future movie roles: drunks, bigots, a recovering heroin addict and a guy in a blue Mustang who had just committed armed robbery. Hawkes grins, remembering a time when he didn't have to worry about being recognized. "I don't want people to know a great deal about me," he confesses. "There are some wonderful actors among our movie stars, but if I saw them on *Kimmel*, it's difficult for me to believe them playing some extreme character." As always, Hawkes sides with the extremes. **GAVIN EDWARDS**



HOT BEATS

TNGHT

Kanye's favorite producers team up and forge new hip-hop sound

Last summer, a producer from Glasgow and a producer from Montreal flew out to Hawaii to work on rap music with a superstar from Chicago. The superstar was Kanye West, and his invitees were

Hudson Mohawke and Lunice, two beatmakers who, together, form the instrumental hip-hop duo TNGHT. "Kanye's way more up on 'underground' music than I would have imagined," Mohawke says. TNGHT, who have worked the underground club circuit separately for years, have just one self-titled EP to their name, but West was right to spot them: TNGHT is one of 2012's most exciting releases, in which the duo take the Atlanta-bred "trap" sound (popularized by

NEW SCHOOL
TNGHT's
Lunice (left)
and Mohawke

Young Jeezy) as the jumping-off point for brain-bending music full of alien synth burbles and kiloton-heavy bass drops. "We wanted to go beyond typical rap sounds but still make music you could hear on the radio," Lunice says. The result represents a new frontier in hip-hop: Like Dr. Dre in the early Nineties or Timbaland later that decade, TNGHT approach their genre with an outsider's giddy disrespect. "Not being from New York or Atlanta helped us," Mohawke says, adding that they have a bunch of big-name projects in the works they can't talk about. "We didn't get pigeonholed with a sound. We came in from another angle." **JONAH WEINER**

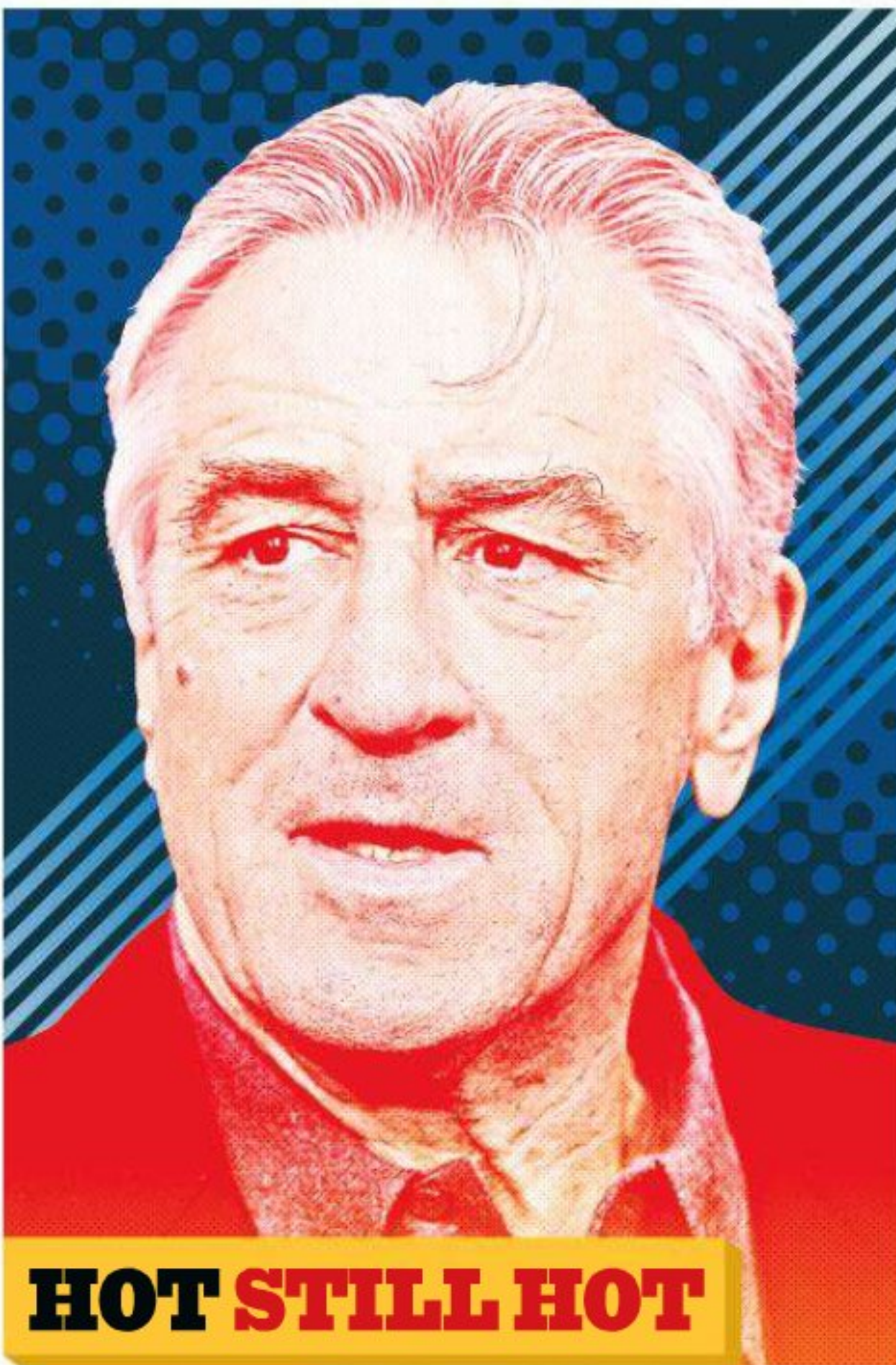
Robert De Niro

Four decades in, the universe's greatest actor is earning Oscar buzz again

IT TAKES APPROXIMATELY four minutes for Robert De Niro to make his first Robert De Niro face. You know the one. Forehead crinkled, eyes squeezed shut, corners of his mouth turned down, laughing-grimacing like the visual average of the comedy and tragedy masks. One second he's sitting in his sunny, high-ceilinged Tribeca office, surrounded by hundreds of snapshots of his family and friends (his grandkids, Bill Clinton, Man-freaking-dela), chuckling about a dorky turtleneck he wears in his new movie, *Silver Linings Playbook* – and the next, you're face to face with Jake LaMotta, with Travis Bickle, with young Vito Corleone. He tries to downplay the myth – “Please, call me Bob,” he says. (Sure thing, Mr. De Niro.) But the guy can't help it. He has *a way*.

At an age when most people would be collecting Social Security checks or cruising Costco for Centrum, the greatest American actor of the past 40 years is working harder than ever. The 69-year-old De Niro has had four movies out this year, and at least four more coming early next. “I won't always be working this hard,” he says, taking a sip from a white teacup. “The fact is, you get older and you have less time – so you want to take advantage.” Even if that means, say, doing a straight-to-DVD crime drama with 50 Cent? “I do them for different reasons,” he says. “Sometimes I like the director or the script. Some are short, maybe I shoot for a week. And sometimes they pay very well.”

Silver Linings Playbook, though, was one he was excited about. The movie stars Jennifer Lawrence and Bradley Cooper,



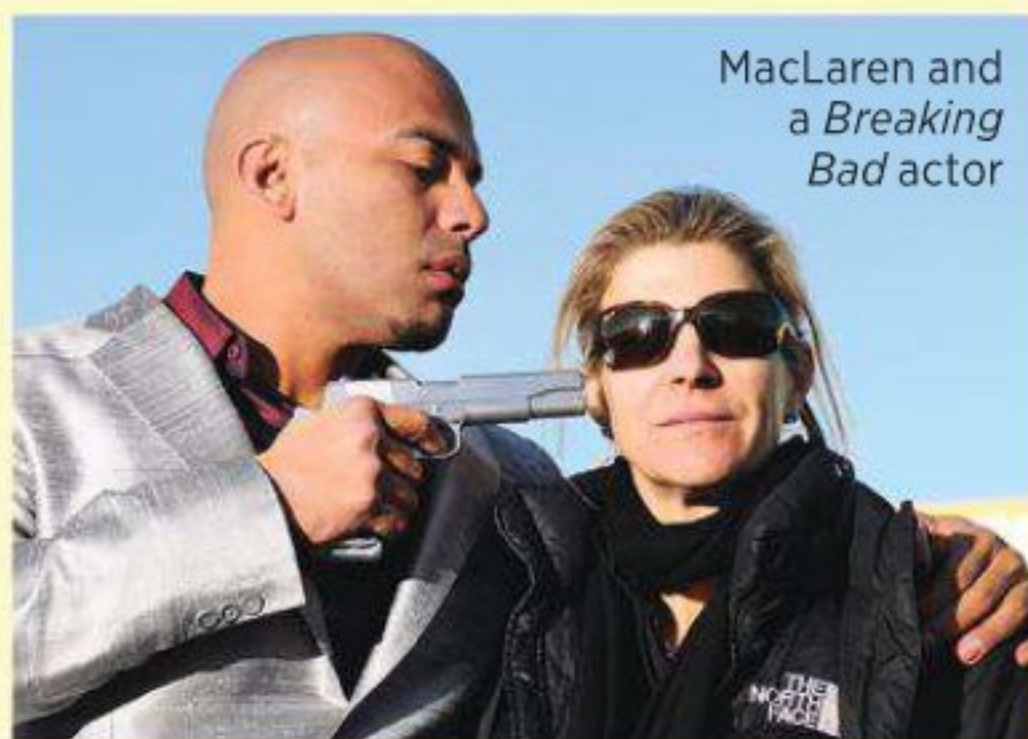
two of Hollywood's hottest stars, and is directed by David O. Russell, fresh off his Oscar nod for *The Fighter*. De Niro plays Cooper's dad, a Philadelphia bookie with OCD and anger-management issues, whose ambition is to open his own cheese-steak restaurant. It's a role that could have been a chance to really ham it up, but De

Niro plays it small, even letting himself get verbally thrashed by Lawrence in one crowd-pleasing scene.

He's always been funny (see *Midnight Run*, *Jackie Brown* or his interview with Elmo on *Sesame Street*). But lately, between the *Analyze* movies and the many iterations of *Focker*-dom, he's been relishing any chance to mock his tough-guy image. He even has his own favorite De Niro impression: Alec Baldwin's on *SNL*. “That was the first time I was aware of ‘A little bit, a little bit,’” he says, referring to his oft-impersonated *GoodFellas* line. “The other day I was reading the script for this new movie, and there was a ‘little bit’ in there. I had to change it.”

Mainly, De Niro seems like a man who's loving life. Last night he had dinner at the Italian restaurant he owns (he had a martini and an entree he seems genuinely not to remember; “just say it was the chicken”), went to bed early, woke up around five, worked out, read a little and played with his 10-month-old daughter, Helen Grace. “It's corny to say – but she's like a ray of sunshine. She lights up everything.” So is she talking yet? “She's starting to,” he says. “A little bit.”

JOSH EELLS



HOT TV SPIELBERG

Michelle MacLaren

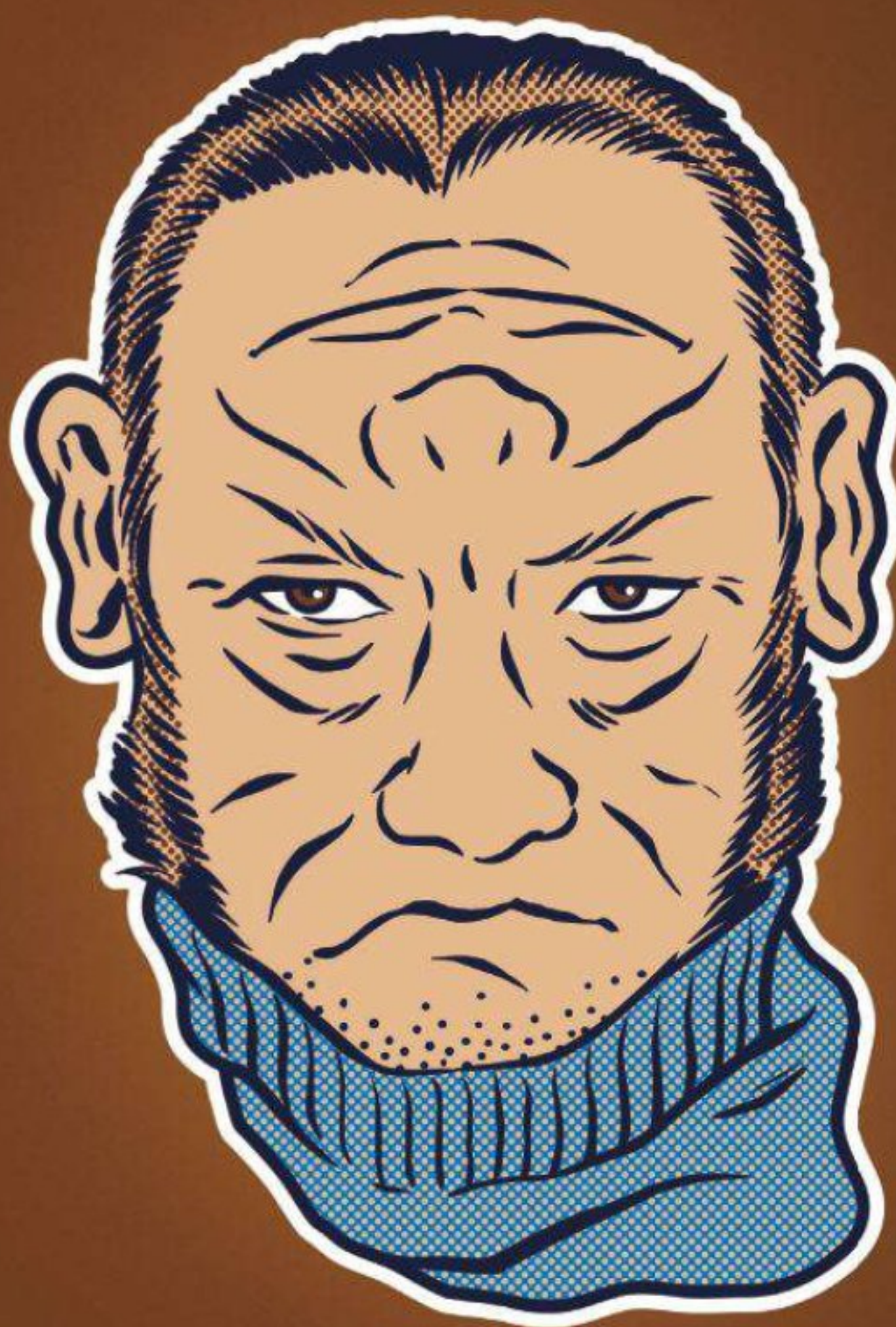
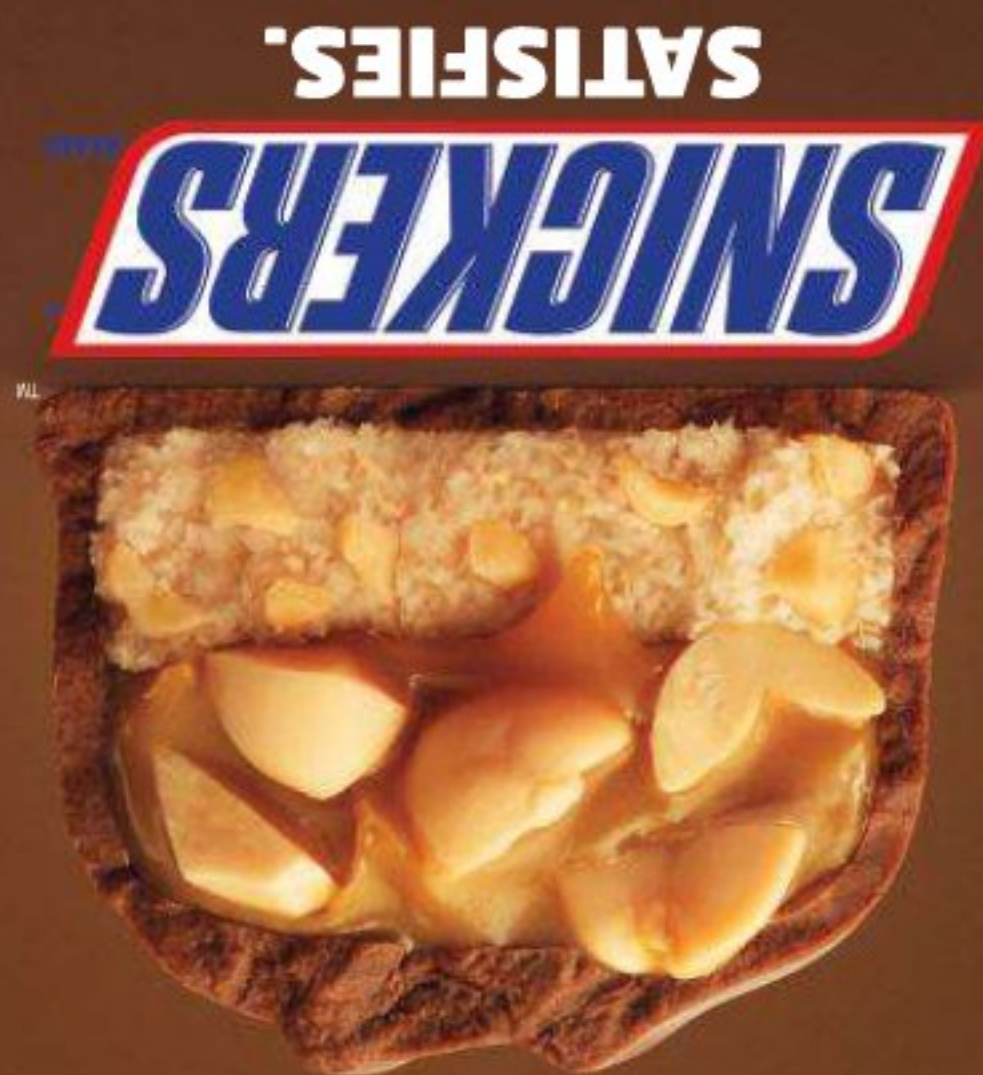
Meet the woman who directs the gnarliest episodes of TV's best shows

Need more proof that TV has swiped the movies' mojo? Hollywood's hottest action director has never worked on a feature film. Michelle MacLaren is the go-to director for cable mayhem – shooting *Breaking Bad*'s wildest episodes, including this season's

montage-happy, blood-soaked finale (showrunner Vince Gilligan calls her “Samantha Peckinpah”). She's currently in Belfast directing two large-scale episodes of *Game of Thrones*. “Television has an immediacy that I love,” she says.

BRIAN HIATT

HOT HAS ANYONE EVER HEARD HER MUSIC **AMANDA PALMER** // HOT TRANSFIGURATION **JAKE CLEMONS**



YOU'RE NOT YOU WHEN YOU'RE HUNGRY.®



Rotate To Satisfy

HOT MAN-KILLER

Melissa George

Women don't usually get to be James Bond. But on Cinemax's espionage thriller *Hunted*, Melissa George gets to kill lots of men in a myriad of ways; bed quite a few, too; lie; harbor dark secrets – and is bent on revenge. "It's a sexy genre," George, 36, says. "I like that no matter what man she is up against, she's certain that she can win him over or kill him. That's a comfortable place to be as a woman."

SEAN WOODS



JAMES HOUSTON/CORBIS OUTLINE

HOT WELFARE MOTHER **BIG BIRD** //// HOT MERYL STREEP **JENNIFER LAWRENCE** //// HOT AT LEAST IT'S



HOT FUNNY LADY

Rebel Wilson

Rowdy and raunchy Aussie gal steals the glee-club comedy 'Pitch Perfect' but really wants to be Dame Judi Dench

WHEN REBEL WILSON first decided to act, she had visions of gravitas. She was trained in drama, and her idol was Dame Judi Dench. "But it didn't work out like that," the native Australian says. "On my first play, at the Sydney Theatre Company, I had a serious role. I came onstage. My first line was 'Amy... Amy...' and the whole crowd laughed. I got pissed off, which made them laugh even more. I quickly realized that everyone just wanted to laugh at me."

Wilson, 28, has grown accustomed to laughter, and after a successful string of Australian TV roles, she earned her big Hollywood break auditioning for Melissa McCarthy's role in *Bridesmaids* – she

didn't get the part, but she so impressed Judd Apatow that the producer wrote a role to showcase Wilson's deadpan.

Since then, her schedule has grown insanely busy: First up is her movie-stealing role as Fat Amy, a swaggering college kid in the a cappella competition comedy *Pitch Perfect*. While Wilson acknowledges that "you don't want to get typecast, and I'm trying to lose weight, my business brain goes: I wouldn't want to be one those gorgeous actresses – there's thousands of them competing against each other." She also has a role in Michael Bay's true-crime caper *Pain & Gain*, and she's working on a TV pilot. Suggest to her that she's accomplished a staggering amount in no time, and she scoffs. "To me, it's very frustrating – I think it's going slow."

JONAH WEINER

HOT ANTICIPATION

'Elysium': The 'District 9' guy's next movie

LOWDOWN Sci-fi auteur Neill Blomkamp finally directs a follow-up to *District 9*. Starring Matt Damon, it's another futuristic political allegory: The one percent move to a fancy space station.

PROGNOSIS All signs point to insanely awesome – Comic-Con fans had to change their trousers after seeing a seven-minute highlight reel.

March 2013

'S.H.I.E.L.D.' TV show

LOWDOWN It's an *Avengers* spinoff without any *Avengers* in it – but it does have the movie's director, Joss Whedon.

PROGNOSIS No Hulk, no credibility. On the other hand: Joss Whedon!

On ABC, date TBA



Samuel L. Jackson, as S.H.I.E.L.D. boss Nick Fury

' Fargo ' goes prime time

LOWDOWN You betcha: The Coen brothers are executive-producing a show loosely based on 1996's *Fargo*.

PROGNOSIS Meh. We'll wait for the *Big Lebowski* video game – the bowling round against Jesus is gonna be sick.

In development for FX

Mad Max: Reboot

LOWDOWN All the post-apocalyptic bloodshed you love, without the anti-Semitic lunatic you hate!

PROGNOSIS Who knows, but OG *Mad Max* director George Miller is signed up, and Tom Hardy is ripping off his Bane mask to play Max. And did we mention no Mel Gibson?

"Fury Road" is due in 2014.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: CHRIS PIZZELLO/INVISION/AP IMAGES; ZADE ROSENTHAL/TM & © 2011 MARVEL; COURTESY OF JONATHAN ABRAMS



HOT SPORTSWRITER

Jonathan Abrams

There are about 500 players in the NBA, and only two of them are named Kobe or LeBron. *Grantland* writer Jonathan Abrams goes deep into the lives of

guys who don't fit so easily into what he calls the league's "assembly line" – a rising star who faded (Eddy Curry), a rookie hopeful plagued by an anxiety disorder

(Royce White) and, most fascinating, enigmatic fuck-ups Stephen Jackson and J.R. Smith. "A journalist's job is to be part psychologist," says Abrams, 28. "A good thing about the NBA is there's no lack of personalities."

His pieces combine a humanizing insight and

deep reporting that's rare in an age of quick-hit snark. Yet despite an empathetic tone, Abrams isn't interested in tales of redemption: "If you didn't like J.R. Smith before you read my story, you aren't gonna like him after. But if you wanted to sympathize with him, you could." JON DOLAN



PEGGY SIROTA/TRUNK ARCHIVE

HOT MEGAN DRAPER **BRODY'S WIFE ON 'HOMELAND'** // // HOT YOUNG JACK NICHOLSON **LIZZY CAPLAN**

HOT SITCOM BRO

Max Greenfield

The breakout star of 'New Girl' has created the blueprint for the all-American d-bag

COULD IT BE POSSIBLE THAT Schmidt is a new paradigm of American manhood? Or is he just, you know, a douche? That's the burning question behind the breakout character on Zooey Deschanel's Fox sitcom, *New Girl*—her ladies'-man roommate Schmidt, as embodied by Max Greenfield. He's a hilarious mix of the worst stereotypes about men as well as women. He is vain. He is crude. Nobody knows his first name. Not only does he wear a kimono, he calls it his "mono." Every time Schmidt does something douchey, his roommates make him put money in the douche jar. And he's always doing something douchey, whether he's primping in the mirror, admiring the ladies ("Did you see that cleavage? I just wanna get my arm stuck down there *127 Hours*-style") or giving Zooey fashion advice: "When I see you I wanna be thinking, 'Who let the dirty slut out of the slut house?'" He even has a book, *The Douche Journals*, to collect philosophical musings like, "How hot would a girl have to be for you to overlook a swastika tramp stamp?"

It's the first big role for the 32-year-old Greenfield, who's turned Schmidt into quite the cult figure, an egocentric cream

ABOUT SCHMIDT

Greenfield is TV's greatest vain cream puff.

puff too innocent and sweet for anyone to despise. "I always think of him as Han Solo in a way," Greenfield says. "In

the weirdest possible way. He's not cool at all. But just when you think this guy's the biggest douche on the planet, he will come in and do something vulnerable and sweet. He's Han Solo in a pair of raw denim and a cardigan."

Maybe it's because Schmidt took all those figure-skating lessons as a child. (Before his mom sobered up and realized he was a boy.) But he's an intriguingly odd mix of the masculine and the feminine. "Very," Greenfield says. "We try to balance those out. He seems so confident, a machismo kind of guy, but most of the time Schmidt is a scared little boy. Deep down, he has a great heart. He's just got a clouded head."

ROB SHEFFIELD



HOT BUKOWSKI

Cat Marnell

On the prowl with New York's dirtiest blogger

CAT MARNELL IS ON the hunt for poppers. It's not her recreational drug of choice these days (that would be PCP), but the quick rush is worth ducking into a few Brooklyn bodegas before the junkie ex-beauty editor will have to resort to munching four or so Adderall. Her "neocon Ann Coulter" blond hair piled atop her head like some pixie Brigitte Bardot, she sidles her 103-pound self (braless in an oversize Newport cigarettes tank and a Chanel jacket) up to the counter. "Do you have poppers?" she asks the old man at the register.

"What?"

"Poppers," says Marnell, without batting a long-lashed green eye. "Rush. Amyl nitrate."

He shakes his head, slightly confused. Marnell thanks him sweetly and backs away. On to the next bodega. You see, Cat Marnell will not be daunted. She will not be shamed. When the nannies

over at SAY Media wanted her to go to rehab this spring before continuing her role as beauty director and health critic at Jane Pratt's xoJane.com, she decamped to *Vice* to consensually continue her many vices, which this past month include "PCP, cocaine, alcohol, Adderall, Klonopin, Ambien, pot, molly. Oh, and I took a Percocet. For a bikini wax." As for her less-recent drug use, "It's easier to ask what I haven't done."

As a beauty editor, Marnell managed to recast the "genre" by writing about her own drug-addled antics in the ostensible service of plugging the beauty products that kept her physically, if not emotionally, intact. Hence columns on the conditioner she used in a mental hospital (Davines) or how she revives her skin while "nodding off on Rophypnol after a night on the town" (Clarisonic Skin-care Brush). "Dysfunction's interesting. The more fucked up, the better. I was like, 'What isn't around? Edgy beauty writing.'" And it resonated, launching Marnell into a pop-culture Internet celebrity to the consternation of those who saw her as a danger to herself and the youth of America (commenters have a

tendency to try to predict her apparently imminent death). Marnell shrugs at the criticism: "I'm a fucking provocative person. So I'm not going to get all huffy and indignant when I am sitting there talking about quitting my job to do angel dust, you know, and basically just swaggering around like I'm fucking Justin Bieber."

The estranged daughter of a psychiatrist and a psychotherapist, she's been hooked on prescription uppers since she was 15. "If you want to be anybody by the time you're 25, you have to pretend you have no parents," Marnell says, referring to wisdom passed on by Courtney Love, at whose home she spent Christmas Eve. OK, yes, she does have her "last-days-of-Marilyn periods, where my bed is like a wad of gum and I can't get out of it." She's open about her bulimia. But she's also self-aware. "It's not hard to wear fucking leather leggings, fur and lots of eyeliner and walk around the city at night. Anybody can." Anyway, she's writing a book proposal. She has ABC's Chris Cuomo's extension scrawled on her left palm in blue ink. "I know what I'm doing," she says, before continuing into the night.

ALEX MORRIS

HOT ROCK AND ROLL MUSE **FIONA APPLE'S PRISON BITCH** // HOT TYPING **NEIL YOUNG'S MEMOIR**

Rod's Wild Years

HIGH TIMES WITH
THE FACES, ELTON
AND THE STONES
**AN EXCLUSIVE
EXCERPT FROM
ROD STEWART'S
NEW MEMOIR**

IN 1971, I HAD THE NUMBER ONE SINGLE ("MAGGIE May") and the Number One album (*Every Picture Tells a Story*) at the same time, on both sides of the Atlantic. Nobody had ever done that: not even Presley, not even the Beatles. Quite suddenly, for the first time in my life, I had a lot of money coming in, to the point where my accountant was telling me to spend more. Specifically, that it might be a smart idea to get rid of £100,000 or so on a property of some kind, to avoid having to pay the same sum in tax. As close as I could get to the target was £89,000: the price on a stucco-faced Georgian mansion named Cranbourne Court, near one of the queen's places at Windsor, in the countryside west of London. We set aside two of the bedrooms for my model railroad, knocking a pair of holes in the wall so that the lines could run room to room. I had an indoor swimming pool added on, and stuck in a Wurlitzer jukebox in the kitchen so we could listen to music while we ate. We threw one proper party the whole time we were there – I particularly remember Gary Glitter falling into the pool and becoming separated from his wig, which floated away like some sort of upturned duck.

The house Elton John shared with [boyfriend] John Reid was just a conveniently short drive from Cranbourne Court, and the parties there were long and legendary. Elton and I had known each other, on and off, since the early Sixties. But it was in the early 1970s that Elton and I drew especially close; the best of mates for a while. Our mutual friend Long John Baldry had christened me "Phyllis," he had christened Elton "Sharon," and that's what we were to each other: Phyllis and Sharon. Or just "dear." ("Hello, dear. How are you, dear? Really, dear?") I loved his sense of humor, loved the fact that he was the kind of bloke who could see the comedy value in driving 30 times around the roundabout that surrounds the Marble Arch monument in the middle of London. We had football in common, and I respected his opinions about music. He had a proper understanding of blues and soul, and if he liked something I had done,



ROCK ANIMAL
Stewart in 1973

Rod Stewart

it meant a lot to me, coming from him. I quietly envied the way that gigantic-selling popular melodies seemed to come to him in such a constant flow.

I also had to be in awe of the fact that, whether it was drink or cocaine, he could see me right under the table every time. One night at his house, we were applying ourselves to the medicinal powders, and it got to six in the morning, at which point I tendered a short letter of resignation ("Fuck it, I surrender") and went upstairs to find a bed to sleep in. Four hours later, Elton woke me by thumping on the door: "Come on, dear. We've got a football match to go to." I looked, and felt, as if I had been run over by a number of different traction engines. Elton, by contrast, standing in the doorway, was bright of cheek and white of smile, immaculate in a morning suit with a jaunty top hat and holding a gold-tipped walking cane.

When it came to the consumption of drugs, I like to think I took a fairly gentlemanly approach. If it was something to brighten the evening, then fine. I knew I couldn't compete with Elton in that area, but in music we had a proper rivalry going on for a while. It's still like that: We both had albums out at the same time in 2010, and there was considerable chafing (on my part) and gloating (on his) that Elton's reached Number Three in the chart while mine reached Number Four. From time to time this rivalry has driven Elton to pull off some beautifully organized stunts. In 1985 I had a bunch of massive footballs, the size of blimps, tethered above Earls Court to mark the fact that I was doing concerts there. Elton hired a sniper to shoot them down with an air rifle. Or like the time the banner for my *Blondes Have More Fun* tour, outside the same venue, was matched by one that Elton put up on an opposite building, which read **BUT BRUNETTES MAKE MORE MONEY.**

The competitive spirit reached a height one night in a hotel in Paris when the pair of us managed to sustain a coke-enhanced dialogue until 10 the following morning. The sole topic of this august debate: which of us had the most money in his bank ac-

One night, Mick Jagger made an inquiry about partner-swapping with my girlfriend and myself. It's nice to know you're in someone's thoughts.

count. The people who were with us had drifted away to bed and come down again for breakfast, only to find us still locked in the same discussion.

There is no more generous person on this Earth, though, than Elton. I have watches he has given me for birthdays: lavish, thickly jeweled pieces engraved **FROM ELT.** He gave my first wife, Alana, with whom he remained good friends after she and I separated, a Steinway piano.

And then there was the Christmas where I thought long and hard about the present I was going to give him. That's always a tough one: What do you get the man who has bought himself everything? Eventually, after a bit of scouring around the shops, I lit upon the solution: a novelty portable fridge. Brilliant. You plugged it in and pressed a button and its door opened automatically, and it lit up and a bottle rose out of it in a cloud of vapor. It cost me about £300, which I thought was enough.

Elton's present to me that year: a Rembrandt. A drawing: "The Adoration of the Shepherds." A fucking Rembrandt! I felt pretty small – although not as small as Elton presumably wanted me to feel when he later referred tartly to my present as "an ice bucket."

I played it a bit better on his 50th birthday, in 1997. I bought him a full-size, sit-under hair dryer like the ones you see in women's hair salons. Two years later, he marked the end of my marriage to Rachel Hunter with a £10 voucher from Boots [a pharmacy chain]. On the card he wrote, "Get yourself something nice for the house."

We traveled together a bit, too, or sought each other out when we were abroad. The band Queen rented a house in Bel Air, Los Angeles, for a while, and Elton and I spent a long evening there with Freddie Mercury, a sweet and funny man whom I really adored, discussing the possibility of the three of us forming a supergroup. The name we had in mind was Nose, Teeth & Hair, a tribute to each of our most remarked-upon physical attributes. The general idea was that we could appear dressed like the Beverley Sisters. Somehow this project never came to anything.

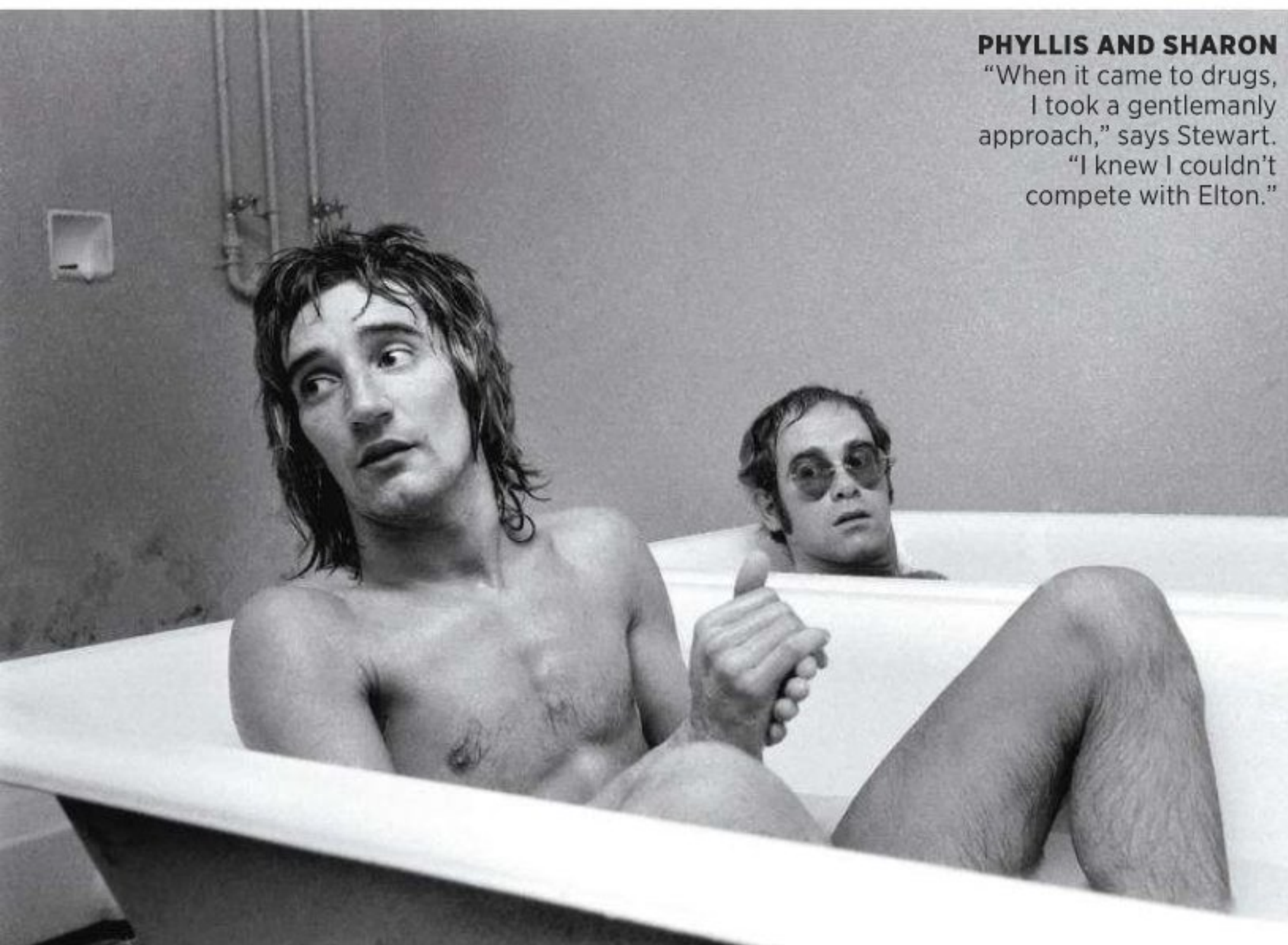
In 1985, Elton and I were together on a short holiday in Africa, a wildlife safari, driving out into the bush to spot the fabled "big five": the elephant, the rhino, the buffalo, the lion and the leopard. The best time to do this, of course, is at an unearthly hour of the morning, which was never my best time of day back then. But there would be Elton, rattling away at the tent flap: "Come on, dear." We shared a Land Rover and appointed ourselves "poopologists": experts in the detection of animals by their poop. In the evening, back at the camp, we dressed up regally in bow ties and dark jackets for dinner 'round the fire.

Even on safari, Elton insisted on bringing his diamonds with him. He had a black box with various pieces of Cartier jewelry in it, worth God only knows how much, entrusted to his assistant Bob – a bit like the way the U.S. president has someone with him with a briefcase containing the nuclear codes. One night in Africa, as we were having dinner, members of the party decided to sneak this precious box away from Bob and hide it, just to get a reaction. But Elton is a very difficult person to faze. Bob began to panic, but Elton simply said, "Don't worry, darling, it's only the daytime stuff."

In addition to Elton's house, the other key center of amusement during these Cranbourne Court days was Ronnie Wood's place, the Wick, at Richmond, a Georgian mansion he had bought off the actor Sir John Mills. Ronnie plumbed a recording studio into the basement, inherited a snooker table along with the deeds to the property, and acquired a parrot, which he had taught to say "Fuck off," but in terms of other domestic essentials, such as, say, a dining table, the house always seemed to me to be a bit on the light side. Mostly it appeared to function as a giant, multiroom wardrobe for Ronnie's stage costumes, which were hanging up against most of the available surfaces, and also as a cupboard for his guitars.

It was a good gathering place, though, somewhere you might drop in at the end of the evening, where there always seemed to be a crowd, mostly hanging out downstairs in the recording studio, jamming, or listening to other people jamming, or helping out Woody on a project of his. Down there you might run into Pete Townshend or Keith Richards, who lived in the cottage at the bottom of Woody's garden for a while, even though he had houses of his own. I still vividly recall the sensation of leaving the studio at the end of a night and going upstairs to discover that it had got light without my noticing – always a slightly poignant downer of a moment.

The Stones had been mentors of sorts to the Faces in the early days. There was a good spirit between the bands – at least until the Stones purloined Woody in the mid-Seventies, when relations were put on hold for a while. (I was at a party with Mick Jagger in the early 1970s, when the rumors of Ronnie leaving the Faces were beginning to bubble. Me: "Are you going to nick Woody from us?" Mick: "I would never do that. I would never break up the Faces." Oh yes, you would, Mick.) It was in the studio of the Wick



PHYLLIS AND SHARON

"When it came to drugs, I took a gentlemanly approach," says Stewart. "I knew I couldn't compete with Elton."

one evening that Mick – speaking, I assume, for and on behalf of Bianca – made a tentative inquiry about the possibility of a little light partner-swapping with my girlfriend, Dee Harrington, and myself. Well, I suppose it's always nice to be asked, and comforting to know that you are in someone's thoughts, but the answer had to be no. Partner-swapping wasn't my scene, nor was it Dee's.

The Faces all rather liked cocaine. I hadn't touched it before I joined the band, but on tour with them in America in 1970 it became freely available. It was best of all, we keenly felt, in pharmaceutical form, because when you were on it you could still get an erection. Keyboardist Ian McLagan had a fake carnation in the buttonhole of his stage jacket, which he would sprinkle with cocaine before a show, enabling him to tip his nose and inhale a reviving draft of powder during the performance. If the rest of us wanted a tiny snort, just to keep our dander up, we would have to pop behind the amps. It was almost a school-boy thing – silly fun.

The amusement slightly went out of the cocaine experience one morning in the spring of 1973. The previous night, the Faces had played a particularly storming gig at the Locarno Ballroom in Sunderland, watched by some members of the Sunderland Football Club. After the show, the player Billy Hughes asked Woody and me if we wanted to join the Sunderland lads for training the next morning. So we dragged ourselves out of bed and headed to the ground. And it was there, in a private moment, beside the pitch, that Woody pushed his face toward me, with his head slightly tipped back, and said, "Here, have a look at this, would you?" And by adjusting the angle of my head and looking up his nose, I could make out a small ray of sunlight where, in the conventional way of things, it really shouldn't have been, passing through his septum.

ONE PERSON WHO WAS AROUND A LOT AT THAT time was the perfectly named Tony Toon, who was my assistant and publicist during those years. Tony wore a battered corduroy jacket and shabby trousers and resembled a down-at-heel Fleet Street hack. He was thin and substantially bald, and there was hardly ever a time when he wasn't sucking on a cigarette, with his fingers held daintily aloft. We called him Fag-Ash Lil. He was mincing, wasp-

ish, scurrilous, incorrigible. He had this running joke where, at the end of every meal, in every restaurant, he would tell the waiter, "Bring me a large amaretto and a big butch man." He did this unfailingly. Others would come to find the joke, and his presence, irksome, but I enjoyed having him around. He made things fun.

He also made things up. I would bump into Bianca Jagger in a hotel in New York and have a brief and mildly flirtatious encounter in the lobby, and a couple of days later a story would appear in one of the papers that the two of us were on the verge of moving in with each other. Another one of Tony's tricks was the fabrication of meetings in restaurants. He would tell me that Mick Jagger had rung up, asking to go to dinner with me, and I would say, "Fine." And then he would ring Jagger and tell him that Rod Stewart wanted to have dinner with him. Tony would accompany us to dinner and get a free meal, while also having some gossip to offer the press.

Perhaps the classic Toon fabrication was the story of the thwarted love affair

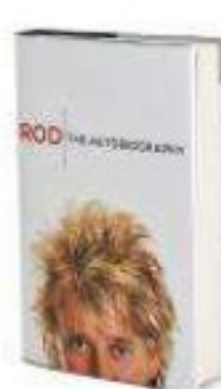
I supposedly had with the daughter of President Gerald Ford. Now, it was true that Susan Ford came to see the Faces play in Washington in 1975. She would have been 18 at the time, glamorous, with long blond hair. It was also true that she came backstage afterward, surrounded by an army of security men. But from those meager details, Tony created a saga worth a week of newspaper headlines, in which our eyes had met across a crowded room, we had fallen hopelessly and permanently in love, Susan had invited me to an intimate dinner at the White House, but fog had prevented me flying in from New York, leading me to send 50 red roses by way of apology. I was constantly saying to him about one thing or another, "But how did they find out about this?" To which he would reply, "I don't know, dear. It wasn't me, dear. I'll find out for you, dear."

Years later, during a stay in Hawaii, Alana and I found ourselves in an overbooked hotel. We had our children Sean and Kimberly in a room with us, and we asked Toon to share an

adjoining twin room with Alana's son Ashley, who was then seven. Toon, of course, couldn't resist pulling some bloke in the bar that evening and taking him back to the room. I fired him in the morning.

Toon's revenge was absolutely inspired. He fed the press a story in which, as a consequence of an evening spent orally servicing a gang of sail-

ors in a gay bar in San Diego, I had been required to check into a hospital emergency room to have my stomach pumped. For the record: I believe I was in the Hotel Cipriani in Venice on the night of the alleged incident. I have never orally pleased even a solitary sailor, let alone a ship's worth in one evening. And I have never had my stomach pumped, either of naval-issue semen or of any other kind of semen. But with minor variations (the quantity of the extracted fluid tends to fluctuate: seven pints, three ounces, half a quart; it's a relatively open field), this story has stayed with me ever since. Say what you like about Tony Toon – and God rest his soul – but he was good at his job.



Adapted from
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MITT ROMNEY & *THE* GHOSTS *OF* MORMON HISTORY

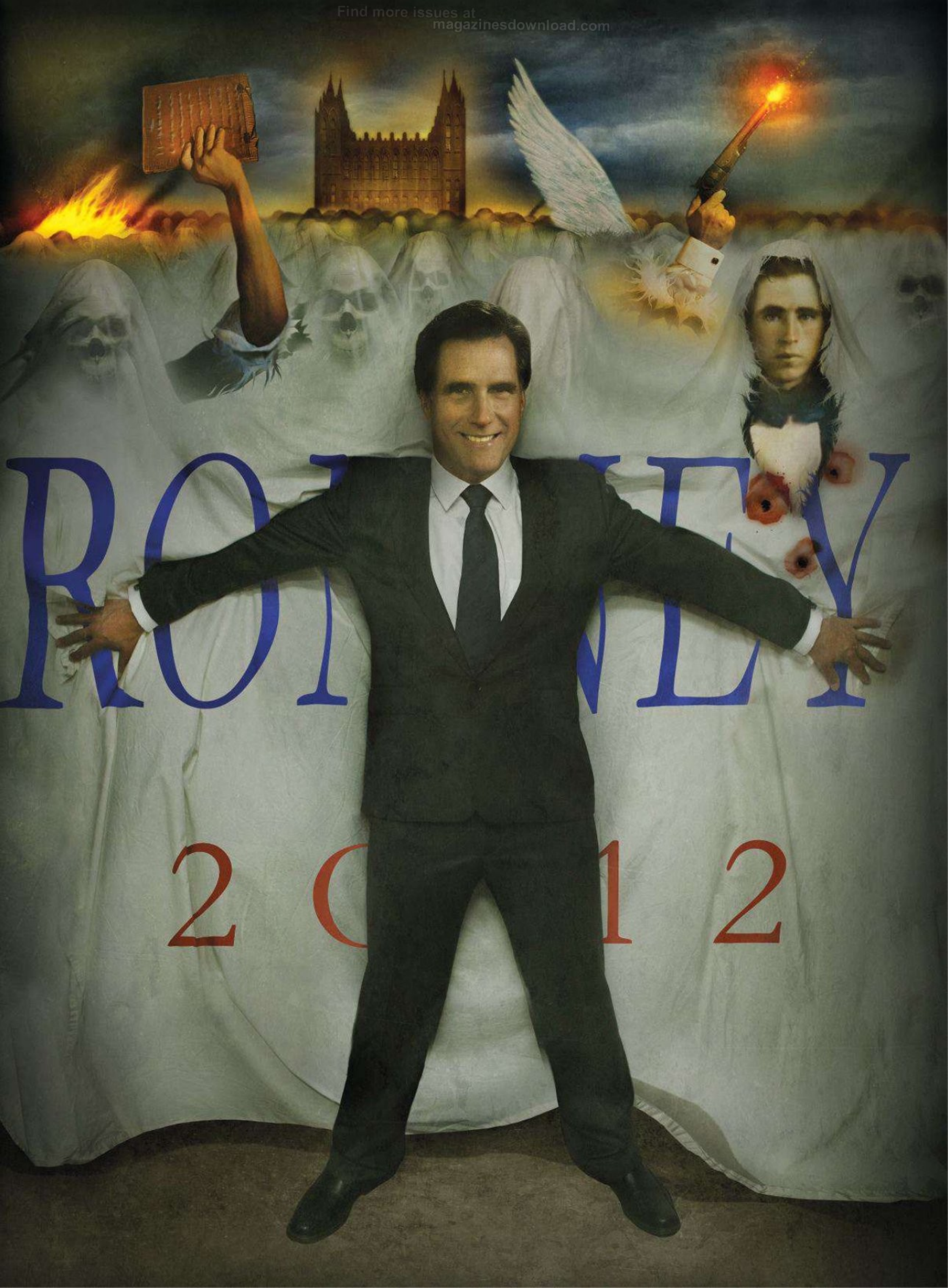
HIS RELIGION DEFINES HIM. BUT YOU'LL NEVER HEAR HIM TALK ABOUT THE MISUNDERSTOOD FAITH THAT HIS ANCESTORS HELPED FOUND – AND THAT HIS FATHER TRIED TO REFORM **BY MIKAL GILMORE**

IT WAS A WARM EVENING, SUMMER OF 1967. I was seated on the steps of my family's front porch in conversation with a Mormon elder, a man I'd liked and respected for years. He was advising me that perhaps I should not attend my church ward anymore. "I've seen the way some of our younger people look at you," he said. "They respect you. I'm sorry, but I don't want that. I don't want you to take them wayward."

As we talked, my mother waited in the living room, a few feet away, listening. She was a lifelong Mormon. Her ancestors had experienced the persecution of Mormons in Missouri, in the late 1830s. Other forebears of hers had joined the last of the Mormons' handcart expeditions to Utah – they literally walked their way across America, pushing and carrying carts that held their possessions. My mother called me inside the house. She

said, "This man is breaking my heart. I want to order him off my property." I asked her not to do that. I still had regard for the elder, though I knew I was nearing a parting of the ways. He saw me as drifting toward the values of the rising counterculture, to a new spirit of rebellion in the land and in the times, and he was right. I tried to explain that I had come to this place, in part, precisely from being a Mormon: Mormons had once been a counterculture – one of the bravest, most embattled in America's history. They had experienced deathly and persistent harassment, and – for God's sake – had been exiled. I now realize, as I began to see how bias and power combine to oppress and punish people, Mormonism helped give me a model for that understanding.

The elder, of course, couldn't accept that view. He left me that evening with a caution I'd heard before from Mormon men: "We should be in the world, but not of the world." That coun-



sel delineates the Mormon paradox: You navigate the realities of the society and times you live in, but you shouldn't be swayed by temporal enforcements or impermanent arguments or values.

I've thought of that moment many times in recent seasons, as I studied Mitt Romney, the Mormon cipher who would be president. I'm only a few years younger than Romney, but his family, like mine, reaches back to early days of the church's history. His ancestors converted to Mormonism a few years before mine and were entwined in some of the most important issues and events that made Mormonism an unparalleled adventure in America. His great-great-grandfather, Parley Pratt, was a famous Mormon philosopher, as well as a friend – and sometime enemy – to the Mormon founding prophet, Joseph Smith. Pratt also helped form the church's tarnished doctrine about race, and next to Smith and Brigham Young, he was the church's most infamous practicing polygamist. In the 1880s, Romney's great-grandfather, Miles P. Romney, exiled himself, three wives and their children from the U.S. to live for decades in a sanctuary that began as an expatriate Mormon socialist commune in Mexico. In more recent decades, Romney's own father, George Romney, became an unlikely progressive force in both modern Mormonism and American politics.

Mormons call themselves "a peculiar people," rooted in a historical sense of long-suffering and maltreatment and a present-day full of large-yet-encircling community. That commonality can add up to something like an ethnic identity. The Mormon church has, for decades, imposed a policy of "correlation" worldwide. The ideal is that there should be no variances in philosophy, interpretations, lessons, weekly activities and even musical choices among Mormon wards around America and the world. Young Mormons like myself and Romney attended Mormon seminary in the early hours before high school, studying church and biblical history and doctrine, and regularly spent time at social events for young Mormons that were all-enclosing and warm, though also designed for homogeneity. We both would've joined the Mormon priesthood at age 12, and there's no question we were both occasionally interviewed about whether we abided by necessary moral codes of behavior: "Do you masturbate?" Both of us, I'm sure, lied the same denials.

Romney, though, went much further in his priesthood calling than I did: He continued on to be a missionary and a bishop (Romney has recently referred to this calling as "pastor," a term I've never heard a Mormon use before) and to serve as a stake president in the Boston area (a position equivalent to an archbishop's function in a diocese).

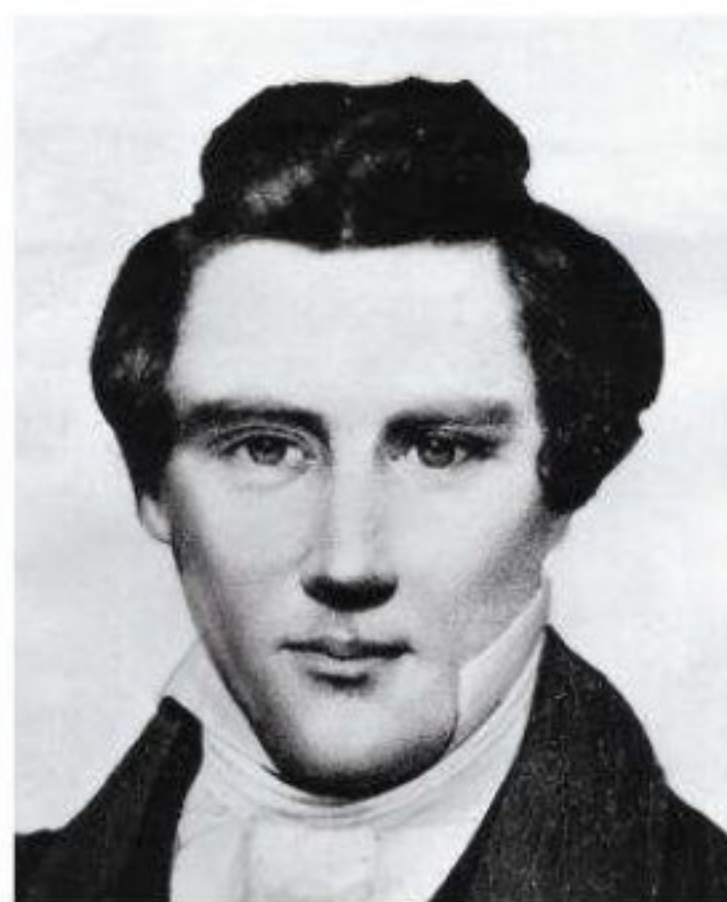
The two of us, I have no doubt, had contrary views of the tumult and ideals of the 1960s that drove me from the church and him deeper into it. Romney belonged, in a way, to a shift in Mormon perspective that had been under way since the early 20th century – a movement not simply to assimilate into American mainstream culture but, more importantly, to embody a mid-century American paradigm. Like other young Mormon men I knew, Romney went on to conservative social and political views,

dutiful patriotism and wholehearted ambitions in the business world. Those values became incongruous to me, not just in the immediacy of the 1960s, but given the resonance of our Mormon past. For much of the 19th century, the United States was at war with Mormonism, as a people, as the territory of Utah, as a philosophy and as a future the country did not want to allow. The Mormon people, my mother's people, had been driven from America. How could I forget that?

And just as importantly, how could Mitt Romney? Romney, like me, comes from the slipstreams of that past – the epoch that was once termed the Mormon Menace and which wasn't anything at all like what's meant by today's cute, patronizing term the "Mormon Moment." But Romney will never, especially at this

late date, volunteer much about how strange it all was – or how his lineage stretches into a dark and bloody part of American history. He will likely never talk about the visions and phantasms, the deaths and the glories of the Mormon mythos. He really can't. It might lay raw too much that Mormons have increasingly, with the passage of years, sublimated – the question of whether the Book of Mormon is a sacred text, the belief that Mormons can become like God, the rationale for generations defined by polygamy and disgraced by racism. Nor does he address the Mormon church's ongoing attitudes about gay rights and women's roles. More than anything, though,

Mitt Romney can't address the fact that he wants to be president of the nation that once tried to destroy his people. Unlike early Mormons, he isn't about to raise any long-dead spirits.



THE MORMON PIONEERS

After the prophet, Joseph Smith, one of the most important figures in early Mormonism was Mitt Romney's great-great-grandfather, Parley Pratt (right), who helped to codify the church's doctrines of polygamy and institutionalized racism.

ONE OF THE PEOPLE ROMNEY NEVER TALKS about is Joseph Smith, the strangest American of all. Smith was born in 1805, in New England, to a family preoccupied with questions of religion. Which of the many Christian sects of the time, they wondered, might save their souls? The Smiths were financially unsteady, and so they sometimes searched New England's hills and wells for treasures, for gold, using seer stones and warlock and dowser's tools, hoping for guidance from Indian ghosts. In 1820, at age 14, Smith knelt in a grove in Palmyra, New York, and prayed to learn which church was the true church. Years later, Smith said that God and his son, Jesus Christ, appeared to him that day in a blinding light and told him to join none of Earth's churches – they were all corrupt.

Seven years later, Smith said, an angel of God named Moroni guided him to a box of golden plates – lost ancient scriptural records – and gave him the means to translate them, and in 1830, Smith produced what was either the early nation's greatest miracle or its boldest fiction (or hoax, some would say): the Book of Mormon. One could argue that few other books published since have had so much impact, and one could just as easily argue that few other books have been so little understood.

Purporting to be the lost history of the first Americans, the Book of Mormon was a tale of genuine depth – an epic of ideology and horror, and of heartbreaking prophecy. It is also among the most violent books ever written. It tells the story of a group of Israelites that, at God's behest, fled Jerusalem, built ships and landed somewhere in the Americas; there, they divided into hostile factions, the Lamanites and the Nephites. Over the next

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millennium, the posterity of these two families warred almost constantly, one side paying the cost for having descended from righteous blood, and the other doomed to live out the legacy of their evil forefathers.

In its final pages, Moroni, the son of the Nephite prophet Mormon, and the last righteous man left in the story – who is later the angel that passes the narrative along to Smith – looks at the bleeding land around him and waits for his kinsmen to find and kill him. Reading the Book of Mormon over the years, it's occurred to me that the hidden force behind all the centuries of destruction might be God himself. It is a vainglorious God who brought these people to an empty land and established the commandments that could only lead to their mutual annihilation. The Book of Mormon gods are not easy gods to love, and their demands will remain bloody. In the book's most telling moment, when Jesus appears to them, he kills countless of them simply as the means, or effect, of announcing his appearance.

Shortly after the Book of Mormon was published – to derision and hostility, because it portrayed the 24-year-old Smith as an American prophet, holding the keys to a radical vision of God's kingdom – Smith founded a new religion: the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It was Smith's enemies, drawing on their hatred of the Book of Mormon, who called them the Mormons. From 1831 to 1839, when Smith and the Mormons built cities in Ohio and Missouri, they were often met with violence and hatred. Vigilantes tarred and feathered Smith; they burned down homes; they raped Mormon women and shot Mormon boys in the head. It was in these earliest days of Mormonism that Mitt Romney's great-great-grandfather, Pratt, joined and found his life transformed.

Since possibly 1831, Smith had been secretly practicing a form of polygamy (at God's instruction, he said) that he described as plural marriage – a principle that granted selected, upright Mormon males to take two or more wives. When Pratt learned he could retroactively seal his marriage to his late wife, Truthful, for eternity in a temple rite, and be allowed to take other wives at the same time, both in this world and in perpetuity, he married again, within weeks after Truthful's death.

Smith – who himself married more than 20 women – knew how seditious and dangerous this form of matrimony was, so he denied that the practice was taking place. In 1839, he established his final city, Nauvoo, in western Illinois, on the Mississippi River. He was its mayor, its land designer and the lieutenant general of its Nauvoo Legion – the largest militia in the state. "Excitement has become the ecstasy of my life," Smith said, "and gives me knowledge and power."

In 1844, in a funeral oration that's become known as the King Follett Discourse, Smith declared his single most imaginative doctrine. In it, he seemingly spontaneously set forth a radical new vision of Mormon divinity – God, he revealed, was once human, and that men could become like Him. That is, men could become gods. It proclaimed that the human spirit was co-eternal with God, whom Smith saw not so much as a creator but as an organizer of laws and sciences. If Romney has ever talked about this doctrine, I have found nothing about it. I can't imagine, though, that he doesn't accept it. It defines Mormon thought – and it is the most imaginative and freeing part of it. It is so freeing, so democratic, that it becomes all the more stunning that Mormonism has gone from this strange but liberating ideal to a conservative ideology that believes in hierarchical meritocracy on Earth, and that has produced Mitt Romney as its seemingly most logical exponent.

As tensions between Mormons and their neighbors increased, Smith organized the covert Council of Fifty, intended to insti-

tute God's government on Earth and, perhaps, to secure for him some protection. The Council named Smith as the King of the Kingdom of God on Earth, then they sanctified his final conceit: Smith would run for the presidency. "I will raise up a government in the United States, which will overturn the present government," said the self-proclaimed prophet, "and I will raise up a new religion that will overturn every other form of religion in the country." But no kingdom could save Smith. In 1844, when a trusted counselor revolted against Smith and published a newspaper in Nauvoo, exposing the truth about the long-denied practice of polygamy, Smith ordered the immediate destruction of the press.

Illinois exploded in rage at the action. "War and extermination is inevitable! Arise citizens... with powder and ball," wrote one newspaperman. Illinois governor Thomas Ford insisted that Smith turn himself and other church officers over to civic authorities to answer for their offenses. On June 27th, 1844, as Smith awaited trial with his brother Hyrum and other church leaders in a nearby town, Carthage, local militia stormed the jail and shot Smith and his brother. Hyrum died instantly. Joseph fell from

a window and a mob gathered around his body, some of them kicking and jeering at him, as his blood poured into the land of the country whose secret history he had once tried to divine. He was 38 years old.

With Smith dead, many thought the church he'd founded would fade away. The *New York Herald* proclaimed, "The death of the

modern Mahomet will seal the fate of Mormonism." Instead, it made it everlasting.

In February 1846, the church's new leader, Brigham Young, led the Mormons beyond the nation's borders, settling 18 months later in the Great Salt Lake Basin. In this millennial land, eventually named Utah, the Mormons would be free from the vigilante armies that had driven them from the United States. Here, they lived their principle of plural marriage for some 40 years without regulation other than of their own rules and customs. Indeed, polygamy became both Mormonism's touchstone and crucible. It was also what led to the end of Mitt Romney's best-known forebear, Parley Pratt, and it determined the destiny of another lineage, the Romneys themselves.

Romney has never said much about Pratt, other than a cursory reference in his 2004 book, *Turnaround*, to his great-great-grandfather as one of the daring Mormon pioneers and as somebody who schemed to charge tolls to prospectors during the gold rush. Romney didn't say that Pratt also enjoyed a stellar rise as Mormonism's most influential thinker of the 19th century. (His 1837 book, *A Voice of Warning*, attained a near-canonic stature, second only to the Book of Mormon.) Nor did Romney offer that Pratt, who married 12 women and fathered 30 children, always remained steadfast in the practice of plural marriage.

In 1854, while heading a Mormon mission in San Francisco, Pratt met Eleanor McLean, a Mormon woman whose husband, Hector, opposed her and his children's membership in the church. Eleanor later joined Pratt in Salt Lake and was sealed to him in a temple ceremony – his 12th and last wife. Hector pursued Pratt across America into Oklahoma and had him arrested. Pratt was released, but Hector kept on his trail, finally cornering Pratt at a farm in Arkansas, where he shot and stabbed the legendary Mormon on May 13th, 1857. When a farmer asked the mortally wounded Pratt what had caused the assault, Pratt responded, "He accused me of taking his wife and children. I did not do it. They were oppressed, and I did for them what I would do for the oppressed anywhere." Pratt also added, "I am dying a martyr to the faith," and soon succumbed. Months later, a group

To expect Mitt Romney to hold himself accountable to secular morality is to misunderstand him.

MITT ROMNEY

of Mormon militiamen heard a rumor that a wagon train passing through Utah originated in Arkansas, the state of Pratt's murder. For that and other reasons, the militiamen slaughtered 120 men, women and children among the traveling party, in a tragedy known as the Mountain Meadows Massacre.

In 1895, one of Parley Pratt's granddaughters, Anna Pratt, would marry Mitt Romney's grandfather, Gaskell Romney, in Mexico. Gaskell's grandparents, Miles and Elizabeth Romney, had converted to the faith in England in 1837, moving to Nauvoo a few years later. Miles found work as a "master mechanic" on the city's temple, but after the murder of Joseph Smith, he and Elizabeth and their young son, Miles P., fled to Utah when Illinois militia threats against the Mormons grew too violent. In 1861, Brigham Young summoned Miles P., then 18, to a meeting and instructed him to take a wife. For the rest of Miles P.'s life, Mormon authorities told him where to go and what to do – including serving a three-year missionary stint in England. Brigham Young also directed Miles to take another wife. His first wife, Hannah, was distraught with the development – "I used to walk the floor and shed tears of sorrow," she later wrote. Mitt Romney has said he finds the idea of polygamy "abhorrent." Miles P., though, had no such qualms: Like Pratt, he became a devoted adherent to plural marriage.

In 1881, church leaders assigned Miles P. and his family to help build a Mormon satellite in St. Johns, Arizona, but the rough-and-tumble locals didn't welcome the incursion. In 1884, a St. Johns newspaper suggested a method to rid the area of the Mormon problem: "Hang a few of their polygamist leaders such as... Romney... and a stop will be put to it." The newspaper's editor, according to Michael Kranish and Scott Helman's *The Real Romney*, described Miles Romney as "a mass of putrid pus and rotten goose pimples; a skunk with the face of a baboon, the character of a louse, the breath of a buzzard and the record of a perjurer and common drunkard." Federal and state pursuits of polygamous men grew so markedly in this period – more than 1,000 Mormons would be arrested – that, in 1885, Mormon authorities sent Miles P. Romney, who by then was a 41-year-old with three wives, to establish a polygamous colony, Colonia Juárez, in the Mexican state of Chihuahua.

In 1890, 13 years after the death of Young, the Mormon church's fourth president, Wilford Woodruff, issued a manifesto, declaring that the church and its people would no longer enact new plural marriages. He'd had no choice. The United States would never relent on the issue, and Congress was about to seize all the church's holdings and wealth. The Romneys, though, wouldn't return from Mexico until events forced them to.

IN SEPTEMBER OF THIS YEAR, IN AN ATTEMPT TO deflect the damage he inflicted on himself when he ridiculed nearly half of America's voting population as dependent on government handouts, Mitt Romney attacked President Obama for a comment made years before, in 1998. "He really believes in what I'll call a government-centered society," said Romney. "I know there are some who believe that if you simply take from some and give to others, then we'll all be better off. It's known as redistribution. It's never been a characteristic of America."

Romney's statement was remarkably disingenuous and went right to the heart of the corrosion in Mormon social and political thinking throughout the 20th century. It also contradicted much about the religion's earliest days. In 1831, Joseph Smith attempted to implement what he called the Law of Consecration, in parts of Ohio and Missouri. It was a doctrine of covenant-

ed Christian communism, and it asked Mormons to deed their property to the church. In turn, the church would allow a member as much of his property and wealth "as is sufficient for himself and family" for his "needs, wants, family and circumstances." The rest of the consecrated property would be overseen by church bishops for the benefit of "those who have not, from time to time, [so] that every man who has need may be amply supplied and receive according to his wants."

Decades later, Brigham Young implemented his own version of this ideal in parts of Utah, as the United Order. Young was disturbed by what he saw as the gradual but steady encroachment of gentile capitalism in Salt Lake City. "I would rather see every building and fence laid in ashes," he said. The United Order was eventually replaced by a law of tithing, in which members pay 10 percent of their income to the church, which remains in effect today.

Romney certainly knows this history. The cooperative ideal had always been part of Mormonism's essence – the church never would have survived without it. In 1911, Utah politician and theologian B.H. Roberts, like Young years

before, protested the continued rise of capitalism in Utah, remarking that it "divides civilized communities into two classes – the proud and the envious... the former living in affluence on the proceeds of their wealth, the latter, for the most part, eking out an existence on the insufficient means secured through their labor. Capital, it must be said, feels power and forgets right; labor in its despair grows desperate and violates the law."

Throughout much of the 20th century, as Mormonism grew away from its founding communal ideals, the church became steadily reluctant to allow this kind of theological or ideological dialogue. Mormons came to

abide by a polemic first published in 1945, in a church magazine: "When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done.... When they point the way, there is no other which is safe.... God works in no other way. To think otherwise, without immediate repentance, may cost one his faith, may destroy his testimony, and leave him a stranger to the kingdom of God." It is almost certainly the worst, the most damaging, of all Mormon dictums.

ONE OF THE FEW MEN IN MID-20TH-CENTURY Mormonism who offered a brave and notable contrast to this sort of constricted and authoritarian thinking was Mitt Romney's father. George Romney was a self-designed man. Heeding the best implicit ideals of Mormonism, he invented new possibilities for himself and his posterity. Born in the polygamous Mexican colony founded by his grandfather, Miles P., he came of age in California, Idaho and Utah. In 1954, he became chief executive of American Motors Corporation, and in 1962 he ran as the Republicans' candidate for governor of Michigan and won. The moral purpose that set George Romney apart from many other leaders in the early 1960s – not just Republicans but Democrats as well – was his devotion to civil rights. In 1964, George Romney tried to influence Republicans' direction on civil rights and stem its drift toward hard-line conservatism. He ended up walking out on that year's party convention and refused to endorse the Republican nominee, Barry Goldwater. "Dogmatic ideological parties tend to splinter the social and political fabric of a nation," he later wrote.

His outspokenness and consistency on racial matters placed him in stark contrast with other Mormon political thinkers, like Ezra Taft Benson, an apostle since 1943, who also served as President Dwight D. Eisenhower's secretary of agriculture in the

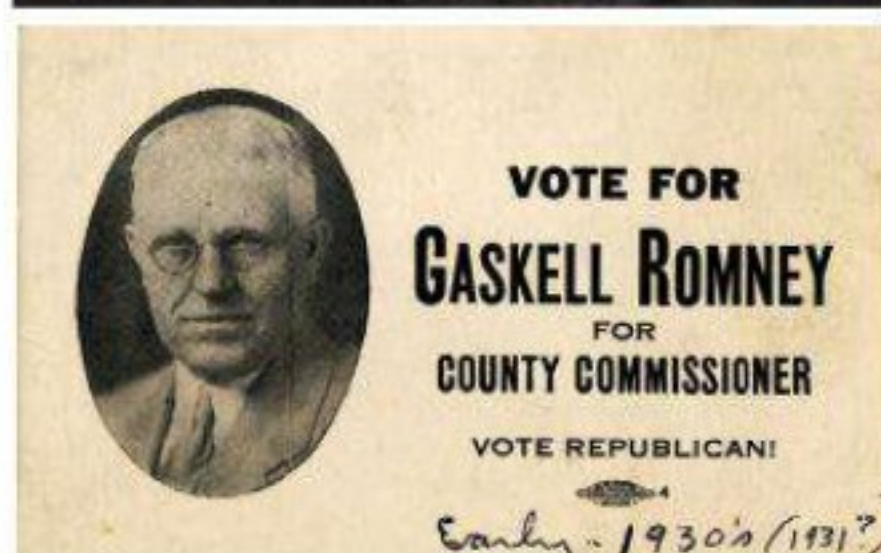
Romney has never had the nerve to take on evangelicals – people who once demeaned, attacked and even tried to outlaw Mormonism.

1950s. In 1963, Benson, who was a supporter of the notorious anti-Communist John Birch Society, said that the civil rights movement had been “formatted almost entirely by the Communists.” (In 1968, the church would deny Benson permission to join Alabama Governor – and racial demagogue – George Wallace as his running mate in a presidential run. In 1985, Benson became the church’s 13th president.) In 1964, another Mormon apostle, Delbert L. Stapley, wrote to George Romney on Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints letterhead, expressing concern over the governor’s “liberal” views on civil rights. “I fully agree the Negro is entitled to considerations,” wrote Stapley, “but not full social benefits, nor intermarriage privileges with the Whites, nor should the Whites be forced to accept them into restricted areas.” George Romney was unmoved. In 1967, declaring support for black civil rights, he said, “If my church prevented me as a public official from doing those things for social justice that I thought right, I would quit the church.”

In 1967, George Romney’s own presidential prospects came undone during a TV interview, when asked about the Vietnam War. Commenting on a trip he’d made in 1965 to Vietnam, Romney said, “I just had the greatest brainwashing that anybody can get...not only by the generals, but also by the diplomatic corps over there, and they do a very thorough job....I have changed my mind....I no longer believe that it was necessary for us to get involved in South Vietnam.” It was a bold thing to say, and it effectively cost George Romney his political career.

George Romney’s Mormonism was never an issue for him on the national stage, though that likely would have changed had he claimed the GOP nomination in 1968 and been forced to answer for the doctrine of institutionalized racism the Mormon church adopted in the mid-19th century. In its early days, the church had supported abolition of slavery, and Joseph Smith had baptized a handful of black members. In fact, these matters had stirred antipathy among Missourians, who feared that Mormons might sanction or import a slave revolt. But Smith had also planted a terrible creed in an early portion of the Book of Mormon: The Lamanites, identified by Mormons to be ancestors to Native Americans, had been cursed with darkened skin by God for their rebelliousness; only repentance and sustained reform could ever make their skin “white and delightsome” again. (In 1984, the wording became “pure and delightsome.”) Smith went on to compound his sin with passages from other writings of his that he effectively claimed as a part of the Hebrew Bible. In one, the Book of Moses – from the early 1830s – Smith wrote that “a blackness descended upon” the children of Cain, because Cain had slain his brother Abel, though, in the early church’s view, this did not prohibit blacks from holding Mormon endowments, including the priesthood. In a second text, the Book of Abraham, published in 1842, Smith claimed that the curse continued in the lineage of Ham, a son of Noah whom Noah had denied the priesthood.

The idea that these texts meant blacks should be denied priesthood in the Mormon church probably originated with Young and Pratt in the early 1850s. After that, the denial became codified. As late as 1950s, conservative Mormon theologian Bruce McConkie wrote, in *Mormon Doctrine*, “Those who



MORMON ARISTOCRACY

Romney’s great-grandfather, Miles P. Romney, was a colleague of Brigham Young. His grandfather, Gaskell Romney, was born in a colony in Mexico where exiled Mormons could practice plural marriage.

were less valiant in the pre-existence and who thereby had certain spiritual restrictions imposed upon them during mortality are known to us as the negroes....But this inequality is not of man’s origin. It is the Lord’s doing.”

By the late 1960s, colleges began to boycott sports contests with Brigham Young University, as protest against the Mormon church’s apparent racial bias. On June 8th, 1978, Spencer Kimball, the L.D.S. church’s 12th president, lifted the ban. That day, the church declared that God, in a revelation, had made plain that “all worthy male members of the church may be ordained to the priesthood without regard for race or color.” Months later, McConkie said, “Forget everything I have said...or whomsoever has said...that is contrary to the present revelation. We spoke with a limited understanding and without the light and knowledge that now has come into the world.”

The Mormon church, though, never offered a conscientious examination of how the wretched doctrine had developed and survived. Perhaps more than anything else in Mormonism’s history, the church’s 125-year-old enforcement of a deeply racist precept undermines claims to trustworthy revelation and authority. The persistence of the policy, and its sudden pragmatic reversal, would imply either the capriciousness of God, or the occasional wrongheadedness and spitefulness of his prophets. Mormon authority could not apologize for generations of bigotry masqueraded as sacred text. To do so might

amount to another revelation, one that would be unthinkable and would challenge the very essence of church doctrine: that Mormonism’s teachings are the work of men, not God.

MITT ROMNEY WAS 31 YEARS OLD, LIVING in Boston, when he heard the news that the Mormon church had changed its policy about allowing full rites and endowments to black members. He was driving, he said, and pulled his car over. He wept. Perhaps he also remembered his father’s nerve on civil rights. George Romney’s willingness to face the criticism of both conservative Mormons and conservative Republicans no doubt played a role in the church’s willingness to meet the times. For Mitt, all of this reverberates in tricky ways. I don’t doubt that he felt moved by the church’s policy change – many Mormons did. According, though, to one friend of Romney’s, in a February 2012 *Salt Lake Tribune* article, Mitt was “really angry” when his old school, Stanford University, had announced in 1969 a boycott of sports competitions with the church-owned Brigham Young University, in protest of Mormon racial doctrine. “He felt like it was (a) naive, and (b) sort of a bigoted, narrow-minded perspective,” said the friend.

But the reversal of its racist doctrines did not lead the church to similarly revisit its long-held views about the subordinate role of women in society. Mounting an aggressive campaign that same year against the Equal Rights Amendment, the church claimed that the ratification of the statute would result in “encouragement of those who seek a unisex society, an increase in the practice of homosexual and lesbian activities, and other concepts which could alter the natural, God-given relationship of men and women.”

When Mitt first appeared on the American political scene, it seemed he might follow through on his father's progressivism. He ran for the Senate as a Massachusetts liberal Republican against Edward Kennedy in 1994. However, Judy Dushku, a Mormon feminist, recently told journalist Joanna Brooks of a conversation she had with Romney when she volunteered to work for his Senate campaign. "I told him...that I heard he was taking a pro-choice stance, and that I was wondering if, as a Democrat and fellow Mormon, maybe I could work for him. 'Yes, I'm definitely for choice,' he said. And I said, 'Great, we agree on that.' Then, he said, 'In Salt Lake, they told me it was OK to take that position in a liberal state.' I said, 'That doesn't make me quite as happy. I'd rather know you really believe it.'" Later, Dushku recalls Romney saying, "Judy, I don't know why you keep coming to church. You are not my kind of Mormon."

Eight years later, when Romney won the governor's office in that state, he once more appeared to voice progressive values: He again supported a woman's right to choose, plus he advocated gay rights. He did all that until a November 2003 Massachusetts Supreme Court decision legalized same-sex marriages. Romney changed his political temper and would later urge the U.S. Senate to support a federal marriage amendment. He perhaps signaled his shift because he knew that same-sex marriage, against which the church has waged a brutal, furtive campaign in recent years, was a matter that the Mormon church was dead set against – due, interestingly, to the same 1843 doctrine that allowed for a plurality of wives. Mormons are commanded to marry and multiply if they expect exaltation in eternity, and they assert that homosexual relationships – especially in marriage – are anathema to that commandment. Romney was probably also thinking ahead to Republican presidential politics. He knew that any support of gay-marriage rights would alienate the party's Christian conservative element.

Mormons may seem to be exemplary conservatives, but they are also something else: Mormons are a people who have claimed new prophets, new scriptures, new holy lands, new doctrines and new heavens. Romney was taken aback then when reporters began asking about the church's beliefs and customs, including its claims to latter-day revelations. "I don't recall God speaking to me. I don't know that he's spoken to anyone since Moses in the bush," Romney said at one point, a comment that undermined the very premise of the Mormon church. Republican evangelicals, though, remained wary of him. In late 2007, Romney realized he had to address the matter of his religion and attempted to do it in the model of a 1960 speech by John F. Kennedy, in which the Democratic senator put to rest qualms about his Catholicism. Speaking at the George Bush Presidential Library in Texas, Romney promised that the Mormon church wouldn't have any influence on his presidential decision-making and made only glancing reference to how Mormons differ from other Christian creeds. He was hoping to allay concerns of the many Christian sects that do not accept Mormonism as a genuine Christian faith. But what he could not say is that Mormonism does not correspond to Christianity so much as it aims to extend and usurp Christianity, to recast it as an American faith.

The speech ended up doing Romney little good. Religious conservatives sideswiped him in 2008 and went on to make plain to

the party's eventual nominee, John McCain, that they would not tolerate Romney as a vice-presidential nominee. Donald Wildmon, a Methodist minister and founder of the American Family Association, said, "[The Republicans] may not win with us, but they cannot win without us." Florida-based evangelist Bill Keller – who hates Mormonism – was much more blunt: "If you vote for Mitt Romney," he wrote in 2007, "you are voting for Satan."

Romney hasn't had the nerve to stand up to conservative evangelicals – people who, not all that long ago, demeaned, humiliated, attacked, even tried to outlaw Mormonism. Instead, Romney has sought to assure them that shared conservative values are paramount. He will likely win the evangelical vote this year – though in turning to the people who once hounded his people, Mitt Romney misreads his Mormon moment. The real Mormon moment, like the Mormon vision of eternity, stretches back a long way. Which is to say it probably shouldn't forget its debts to ancient ghosts, or to the curses of old enemies.



A MORMON PROGRESSIVE

In the 1960s, Romney's father, George (center), bravely challenged both the Mormon church and the GOP to embrace civil rights. His son has shied away from bold stands.

THERE IS A LACUNA that guides Mitt Romney, a place that can't be touched, and yet at the same time it fills him. It is that sense, one many Mormons have, that he is in the world but not of the world – it's the Mormon Tao. But that conviction wouldn't necessarily serve a president well. As numerous journalists and countless everyday people have observed, there's something in Romney's bearing that has made him seem incomprehensible (not the same thing as enigmatic), remote, a man who doesn't seem accustomed to, or solicitous of, how others live in the world.

When Romney veers from liberal to conservative to moderate stands, what he makes plain is that the world he is in, but not truly part of, is the political world. The shifting is a sleight of hand, like Joseph Smith's magic, a means to an end. That end is higher attainment in the big payoff, the eternal world. As a result, expecting Romney to be accountable to a secular morality is to misunderstand him. That's part of his Mormon hubris, and

it's what grants him the right to withhold specifics about both his political vision and his deeper beliefs. But if you hold yourself apart from the world, how can you understand those who do not? And how can they ever understand you?

This is likely not a question that Romney would answer. He shuts down inquiries about his Mormon experience – in part because some of them aim to be sensational (does he wear the temple garments known as "Mormon underwear"? The answer is yes) – though there also remain fair questions about how his Mormonism might affect his views on social and economic issues. The church can hardly claim it's unfair to ask about such things when it invests manpower and money in these areas.

What started as an adventure in supernatural-but-smart-and-egalitarian (-and-bizarre) religious community in the 1830s has ended up as a power system that affirms illiberal and patriarchal authority. The Mormonism that embodied resistance as a way of living, and intellectual inquiry as a way of growing, has had a rough time of it in the past century, but if that earlier Mormonism had recognized its own best implications, it would have worked for deliverance on Earth. Instead, it has become a Mormonism that forgets where it came from. It has become Mitt Romney's Mormonism.

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Gary Clark Jr.'s 21st-Century Blues



A Texas young gun beefs up and branches out on an uneven, occasionally thrilling LP



Gary Clark Jr.

Blak and Blu Warner Bros.

★★★★½

BY JON PARELES

How can a serious bluesman thrive in the age of Auto-Tune? That's the question Gary Clark Jr. grapples with on his major-label debut. Since his teens, Clark has been the young titan of Texas blues, coming out of Austin in the early 2000s with a smoothly long-suffering voice and one hell of a mean guitar tone, playing solos that claw and scream their stories with ornery splendor. He's a full-fledged guitar hero of the classic school.

And that's all he would need to be, if he only wanted to spend his career playing for roots-music die-hards and recording for his own Hotwire Unlimited, the Austin label that released his albums from 2004 to 2010. But Clark, 28, has a different trajectory and a much larger goal: to reach his own generation, the one that grew up on hip-hop and R&B.

Clark spreads his musical bets on *Blak and Blu*. Instead of having one signature sound, he tries a dozen, delving into modern R&B, retro soul, psychedelia and garage rock. A handful of the album's songs are cherry-picked from Clark's Hotwire catalog, remade in studios that make everything sound bigger and tougher. Abetted by producers Mike Elizondo (Dr. Dre, Fiona Apple) and Rob Cavallo (Green

Day), Clark is clearly aware that young listeners have heard the Black Keys, Prince and the Roots. Although most songs have a live, hand-played flavor, a few of them – including the title track – tilt toward the static, looplike grooves of hip-hop.

The album's core is still the blues. Clark dips into the historical timeline, sampling a juke joint's worth of 20th-century styles: from the rural slide-guitar picking of "Next Door Neighbor Blues" to the desolate tidings and incendiary lead guitar of "When My Train Pulls In" to the Cream-y riffing and layering of "Glitter Ain't Gold." But Clark won't be genre-bound. "Ain't Messin' Round" is pushy, updated Stax-Volt soul with Clark's fuzztone leading the charge of a horn section. "Things Are Changin'" makes another Memphis move with a fat Al Green-style backbeat.

As an album, *Blak and Blu* makes for a bumpy ride. The roaring, distortion-soaked blues of "Numb" – which sounds something like Stevie Ray Vaughan tackling "Come Together" – upstages the falsetto croon and string arrangement of "Please Come Home." The souped-up Chuck Berry boogie of "Travis County" collides with "The Life," which has Clark ruminating over woozy, echoey keyboards: "Can't go on like this/Knowing that I'm just getting high." Clark and Warner Bros. clearly expect listeners to carve their own playlists from the album's 13 tracks.

Outside the structures of the blues, Clark is still a journeyman songwriter, sometimes settling for easy rhymes and singsong melodies, as he does in "Blak and Blu," which aspires to the thoughtfulness of Marvin Gaye, wondering, "How do we get lifted/How do we not go insane?" Give Clark credit for striving to be something more than a blues-rock throwback and singing from a troubled heart. And hope that he gets through the narrow portals of pop radio. But on this album, it's still his blues that cut deepest.

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Hear key tracks from these albums at rollingstone.com/albums.

Big voice,
Skrillex 'do:
Goulding



Ellie Goulding: Weird, Warm and Full of Beats

U.K. hitmaker behind "Lights" cross-wires her singer-songwriter heart with her disco soul

Ellie Goulding *Halcyon* Cherrytree/Interscope ★★★★★



Ellie Goulding emerged in 2010 with a one-two punch: first, her (still-rising) helium-voiced hit "Lights," then, an elegant read of Elton John's "Your Song" that led to a gig at Prince William's wedding. As Cinderella stories go, it's a good one. But as a 25-year-old adept who dresses rave-y hooks in folk-rock tunefulness and art-pop filigree, Goulding earned her glass slippers.

Halcyon, her second LP, pumps up her sound as befitting a court musician. The single "Anything Can Happen" has the London Community Gospel Choir swooping around staccato piano and club beats; elsewhere she's multitasked into a one-woman choir. If the songwriting doesn't quite measure up to U.K. art-pop divas like Kate Bush, the hooks always go to town, and her voice – Dolly Parton-dazzling in the upper register – mates gorgeously with electronics, swirling around itself on the title track, morphing through synthscapes on "Don't Say a Word." "I Need Your Love," a bangin' collab with Scottish rave-op master Calvin Harris (Rihanna's "We Found Love"), gets slotted as a "bonus cut," maybe to avoid confusing the more genteel fans. But Goulding's magic is in her multitasking. And if she really gets busy with current paramour Skrillex, things could get even more interesting.

KEY TRACKS:
"Halcyon,"
"Anything
Can Happen"

WILL HERMES



Donald Fagen

Sunken Condos Reprise

★★★★½

The Steely Dan frontman stays true to his old school

On "Memorabilia," a polished-up nugget of brittle pop funk, Donald Fagen calls the title trappings "souvenirs of perfect doom." And if this Steely Dan-style set is proudly retro in sound, nostalgia remains suspect at best to the 64-year-old. "Slinky Thing" snarks at "a burned-out hippie clown," and a cover of the Isaac Hayes deep cut "Out of the Ghetto" gets down with a wink. The band, especially guitarist Jon Herington, is predictably hot and smooth, Fagen's voice oily-sweet as ever. On "New Breed," the singer is dismissed as "Jurassic Park" compared to a dot-commie competitor. Maybe, but to this day, no one does booby-trapped boutique pop better.

W.H.



Jamey Johnson

Livin' for a Song:

A Tribute to Hank Cochran

Mercury Nashville

★★★★★

Nashville leading light organizes warm, star-filled homage

Hank Cochran, who died at age 74 in 2010, wrote country ballads so perfectly shaped and cadenced you hardly believe they were written at all. Jamey Johnson's tribute record enlists an amazing intergenerational all-star team (Willie Nelson, Alison Krauss, Elvis Costello), who join Johnson in traditionalist renditions of 16 Cochran classics, from the Patsy Cline favorite "I Fall to Pieces" to the heart-wrenching "Make the World Go Away." It's loving genuflection; it's also proof that Johnson, 21st-century country's outlaw ne plus ultra, is also one of its most sensitive balladeers – beneath the scary beard, he's an old softie.

JODY ROSEN

TOP SINGLES

Bruno's Bedroom Jam

Bruno Mars "Locked Out of Heaven" ★★★★★½

Bruno Mars is one of pop's courtliest young stars – a gentleman through and through, from his chivalric oaths ("I'd catch a grenade for ya") to the rakish Sinatra-style tilt of his fedora. But Mars' new single doesn't bother with old-fashioned euphemism. "Your sex takes me to paradise," he cries. The song is about unbridled passion, but as usual with Mars, the aesthetic is tidy and impeccable, pop songcraft polished to a high-gloss gleam: jittery Police-esque rock-reggae verses that erupt, amid thunder-boom synths, into a steamrolling four-on-the-floor chorus. There are at least a half-dozen big hooks here, including the background grunts of "Oooh!" – for those who didn't realize that Bruno's serious about the sexy business. **JODY ROSEN**

The world's cleanest soul man: Mars



Benjamin Gibbard

Former *Lives* Barsuk

★★★★½

Zooey's ex licks wounds, delivers slo-mo prettiness

What do you do when the world's most flawless bangs walk out on you? Ben Gibbard – the former Mr. Zooey Deschanel and chief of Death Cab for Cutie – mourned with a solo set of Beatles-nuzzling ballads so pretty they'd make any actress jealous. As always, it's fascinating how much emotion Gibbard represses, squeezing out his quaver like so much icing on *Cupcake Wars*. Former *Lives* may be chilly. ("Bigger Than Love," his duet with Aimee Mann, would frost oranges in August.) But it's heart-break made perfect, and there are loads of perverse pleasure in that. **N.C.**



Bat for Lashes

The Haunted Man

Capitol

★★★★½

Arty Brit serves up bad vibes in good ways

Natasha Khan's sexiest, spookiest LP starts with its cover: the naked singer shouldering a crumpled, naked man. The emotional metaphor seems familiar to her. "From inside his mouth, I lick the scars," she murmurs on "A Wall," amid shivering synths. On the title track, a male choir reps for a dude "scorched" by a kiss, before an orchestral march and Khan's Joan of Arc vocals send him packing. On "Laura" and "Marilyn," the girls are no less damaged. There are cameos by Dave Sitek and Beck. But the visions here seem all her own. And they're pretty awesome. **WILL HERMES**

Rihanna Gets Back to Ballads

Rihanna

"Diamonds" ★★★★★½

Chris Martin took to Twitter to declare Ri-Ri's newest one of his "favourite songs." Not a shock: It's very close to Coldplay soul, a striking turn into lustrous power balladry after a string of filthied-up R&B sexcapades. Written by arty Aussie diva Sia and produced by Benny Blanco and Norwegian hitmaker Stargate, it's glassily curvaceous and strikingly spare: "Find light in the beautiful sea/I choose to be happy," she sings over an ice-flow piano and cascading beat. If she really has started things back up with that other Chris, then this hits the perfect, vaguely creepy note of against-the-odds hope for the occasion. **JON DOLAN**



Paul Westerberg

"My Road Now"

★★★★

The first Westerberg song in a while plays like a songwriter's card trick. It starts as a tender piano-ballad portrayal of an outsider, until the reveal comes at the chorus; Westerberg turns ornery, ordering the song's subject, again and again, to disappear. His ire barely changes the gentle tone. **ROB TANNENBAUM**

The Joy Formidable

"The Ladder Is Ours"

★★★★½

The Welsh indie-rock trio leaven their ravensonic assault with an air of wistfulness, a combination that makes the towering drumbeats and rip-roaring riffs hit even harder; Ritzzy Bryan's plain-spoken vocals slice through sonic chaos, balancing the melancholy of lost love with a hope that sounds almost serene. **MAURA JOHNSTON**

G-Dragon

"Crayon"

★★★★

A smashing synthesis of pidgin rap, EDM head rush and YOLO 'tude: The token "pretty boy" rapper from K-pop crossover comes Big Bang drops a Joker laugh line ("Why so serious?") and a Kanye contraction ("cray") over a zooming Seoul nightclub beat, for a Korean-English mishmash that scans like an international student's peak-hour Facebook feed. **NICK CATUCCI**

Ceremony

"Everything Burns"

★★★★½

Breakneck, brief and free of any unnecessary detailing, "Everything Burns" carries remnants of Ceremony's decade-old origins in severe California hardcore. But, appropriately, this shout-along alarm about the inevitability of change is also the catchiest song they've recorded. **R.T.**

Big Boi's Roller Rink Jam

Big Boi feat. Kelly Rowland

"Mama Told Me" ★★★★★

The OutKast MC's latest single rides an electro-funk groove so spry, Prince-ly and Eighties-inspired that you can practically see Molly Ringwald roller-skating to it. Big Boi sounds typically light on his feet, speed-drawling comparisons between himself, Mozart and Van Gogh, while Kelly Rowland plays airy hook girl, reciting "Mama"'s practical advice. It's neon-lit pop fun – a straightforward crowd pleaser from a rap hall of famer. **CHRISTIAN HOARD**

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Flying Lotus

Until the Quiet Comes Warp

★★★★½

Abstract electro soul, featuring Thom Yorke and Erykah Badu

Making music for those post-bong-hit moments where even the dust balls in your bedroom seem wholly resplendent, Steven “Flying Lotus” Ellison has a taste for 21st-century soul jazz with swarming high-end displays – a whirl of high-hats, static, hand claps and, quite possibly, subatomic-particle chatter. Meanwhile, his bass abstractions (check “Sultan’s Request”) turn dubstep into gallery art. It all adds up to something so captivating that vocal guests like Erykah Badu (“See Thru to U”) can get a little lost. Although maybe that’s the point: When Thom Yorke murmurs something about a mirror in “Electric Candyman,” it conjures one that’s been shattered into thousands of dazzling pieces. **WILL HERMES**



Miguel

Kaleidoscope Dream

ByStorm/RCA

★★★★½

A state-of-the-art freakiness from an outlandish R&B talent

Just when you thought there were no new ways to say “I love you,” here comes Miguel Pimentel: “I’m gonna do you like drugs tonight.” With this pledge, Miguel proves that he is, easily, uninhibited enough to inherit the tradition of eccentric R&B freakiness handed down from Marvin Gaye to Prince to R. Kelly. He rubs his shadowy croon against electronic gurgles (“Use Me”) or electric guitar (“Pussy Is Mine,” which is not about a cat), keeping his tracks spare and unpredictable. In the gentle, wonderful hit “Adorn,” he promises adoration to his lady; it’s the first song here, and once he’s in the front door, he wants the lights down and the panties off. **ROB TANNENBAUM**



The Mountain Goats

Transcendental Youth Merge

★★★★½

Moving album about madness, with horns, hooks and poetry

An album full of characters struggling against dead-end jobs, drug addiction and depression doesn’t exactly sound inviting, but in the hands of John Darnielle, it’s magic. Darnielle is a former psychiatric nurse; his catchy, gracefully appointed chamber-pop songs paint portraits of dread and paranoia with empathy and precision. “Harlem Roulette” – which jump-cuts from Frankie Lyman’s final recording session, in 1968, to the 21st-century Pacific Northwest – is as close as a pop song gets to philosophy. The title track brings sumptuous horns and a glimpse of, yes, transcendence: “Clutch those broken headboards, ride the highest wave/Dusky diamonds shining in the far depths of the cave.” **JODY ROSEN**



Titus Andronicus

Local Business XL

★★★★★

Jersey punks swing for the fences – or just rip them down

Glen Rock, New Jersey’s Titus Andronicus may be the most ambitious punk band in America. On 2010’s *The Monitor*, they wrapped an epic breakup record around a Civil War conceit. Their third disc is a hilarious gut-wrenching mess that relocates the Replacements and Thin Lizzy at their most bracing and bighearted to the suburban skate-park diaspora – all centered around Patrick Stickles’ glass-half-smashed existentialism. This is a band that titles its big anthem “Still Life With Hot Deuce on Silver Platter” and drops a nine-minute swaying-drunk procession called “Tried to Quit Smoking,” where Stickles sings, “But I made my bed/Now we’re fucking in it.” It’s a big bed. **JON DOLAN**



Yoko Ono, Kim Gordon and Thurston Moore

YOKOKIMTHURSTON

Chimera

★★★★

Three New York art-rock vets hold a noisy summit

Near the start of this abstract collaboration, Yoko Ono seems to cackle “mwah-ha-ha!” amid groans, chants, improvised poetry and impressionistic sex noises. Humor was part of the pioneering sound art she explored with John Lennon – alongside joy, fury, lust and glossolalia craziness. And so it is here. Recorded before Sonic Youth’s Kim Gordon and Thurston Moore announced their separation, the voice-and-guitar cacophony might suggest avant-garde couples counseling. But what’s most remarkable is how legible it sounds. And maybe it should, since it distills the kind of audio radicalism these three have channeled into pop music for decades. **W.H.**

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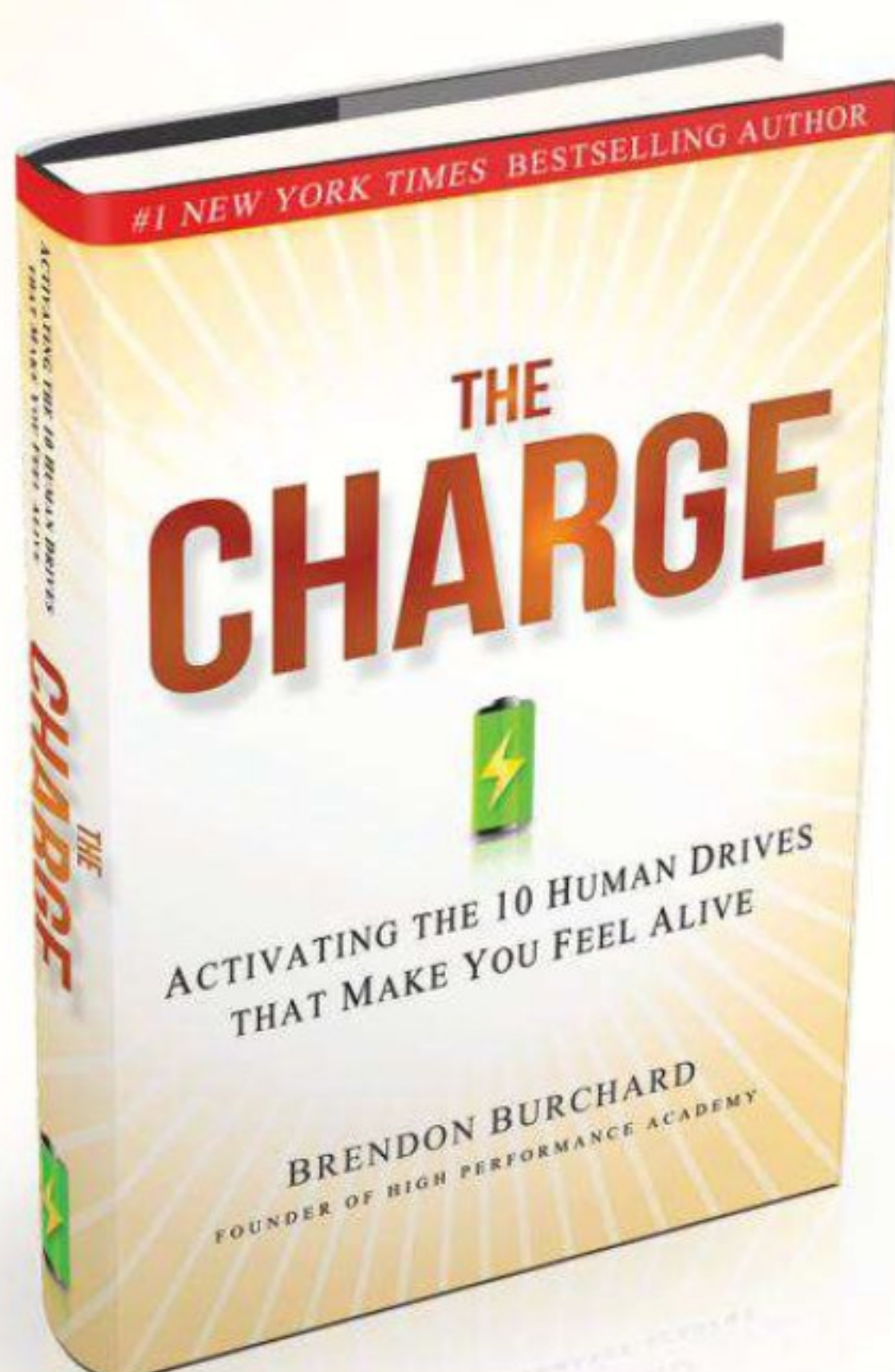
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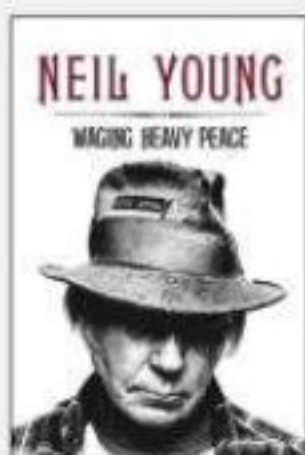
Neil's Ambling Memoir

Waging Heavy Peace is an autobiography that only Neil Young could write: honest, moving and kind of all over the place

Waging Heavy Peace

Neil Young

Blue Rider Press ★★★★★



"Generally the best feelings are the early takes," Neil Young remarks toward the end of his first memoir. He's explaining his approach to recording with

Crazy Horse, but he could just as easily be describing the loose, informal way he writes. Penned without a co-author, *Waging Heavy Peace* often reads less like a traditional autobiography than a lively blog – full of casual asides, unpredictable tangents and open-ended questions as he looks back on his life at age 66.

Young touches in no particular order on his Canadian childhood, his zigzag path to stardom, failed relationships and an enduring marriage, and practically every car he's ever owned, among other topics. Career highs like the creation of *On the Beach* or "Ohio" tend to receive tantalizingly brief treatment. While Young's free-associative riffing can feel repetitive when he begins yet another chapter on digital audio – he sees cruddy MP3s as a crime against art – he can also be dryly hilarious. And by book's end, he's in a poignant mood, circling back to the many friends he's outlived. Young is haunted by his late father's descent into dementia, and unsettled by the idea that he might end up the same way. "I am always getting scared that I will be in the middle of some long-winded story and forget what I'm talking



Wants to live, wants to give: Young in 1970

about," he confesses, "and my secret that I am slowly losing my mind will be out."

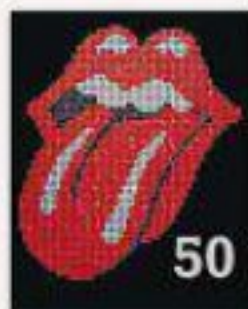
Waging Heavy Peace shows that Young is still in full possession of that stubborn, brilliant, one-of-a-kind instrument. The harshest criticism you could make is that he's already traced this story's outlines more eloquently in tunes from "Helpless" to "Harvest Moon." "I have been lucky, and life has gifted me," Young writes. "I know who I am and what I've been part of.... The music speaks when words can't."

SIMON VOZICK-LEVINSON

The Stones' Life in Photos

The Rolling Stones 50

Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Charlie Watts, Ron Wood Hyperion ★★★★★



This coffee-table book is packed with more than 1,000 Stones

photos, some never before published, mostly from the archive of the U.K.'s *Daily Mirror*. There are treasures, like outtakes from the *Between the Buttons* cover shoot and Seventies party Polaroids. But most shots

feel less personal and more promotional, with standard live snaps and stats like how many people saw the *Voodoo Lounge* tour. The Stones comment throughout; no one needs to hear Keith Richards again tell the story about slamming a crazed fan with his guitar, but there are interesting bits, like Jagger's and Richards' differing memories of 1964's *T.A.M.I. Show*

(Jagger says they didn't actually follow James Brown, as Richards suggests), and Jagger recalling why the band ditched its giant inflatable penis after a San Antonio gig in 1975 ("It didn't seem worth spending a night in jail for it"). The book ends on a promising note: the Stones calling the *Bigger Bang* tour "our biggest tour ever – so far." **PATRICK DOYLE**

**BACK
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OFFERS AND NEWS**

Lord Huron

Los Angeles
folk-rock quintet
evoke a modern-
day Wild West

Lonesome Dreams
IAMSOUND ★★½

Lord Huron
leader Ben
Schneider

**ARTIST
TO
WATCH**

"Oh, there's a river that winds on forever/I'm gonna see where it leads," begins Lord Huron's debut LP, campfire strumming and robust vocal harmonies ghosted by tuneful howls somewhere between cowboy yodels and coyote bays. Ben Schneider's soaring folk-rock project conjures a life unfettered and outside of time – roads and rivers wind, a man wanders beneath trees ("She Lit a Fire") or imagines sitting by a lake "for a thousand years" ("In the Wind"). The palette is broad, with layered guitars, harmonica and saloon piano tinged with gamelan-style percussion ("Brother") and Asian-flavored melodies ("Setting Sun"), all serving an impressionist Wild West cosmology that includes Schneider's visual art and film work. It's ambitious, beguiling stuff. "For-

KEY TRACKS:

"Lullaby,"
"Brother"

get all your troubles," he sings on "Lullaby" – the prettiest track on an album fat with beauty – inviting the listener to "dream of laughter and old friends and lovers," and giving you the tools to do it. **WILL HERMES**

KEY FACTS

HOMETOWN Los Angeles

BACKSTORY Schneider grew up in Michigan and moved to L.A. to start a career as a visual artist. But when he found himself on the shores of Lake Huron, in his home state, he was inspired to record tunes that became the basis of Lord Huron's debut EP.

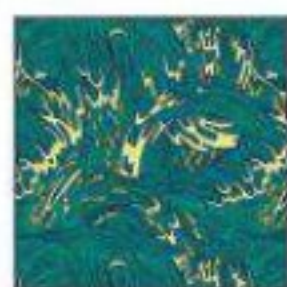
GHOST WRITER Schneider claims the album is inspired by the *Lonesome Dreams* series of Western tales by George Ranger Johnson – a collection of books, and an author, that don't actually exist. Schneider dreamed them up as one component of the album project; he even created a website and actual hard copies for the books.

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Trey Anastasio

Traveler Rubber Jungle/ATO
★★★★

Phish guitarist reels in the noodles with spacey warmth

The jam-band swami tries atmospheric pop with members of the National and Mates of State on this solo joint. The arrangements, full of spacious production and abstract beats, can be gorgeous, and the cover of Gorillaz's "Clint Eastwood" is spot on, even if its potent hooks point to a shortage elsewhere. But "Pigtail" – all class-clown philosophizing and noodle-dance groove – is the slam-dunk: a reminder of what he does better than anyone else. **W.H.**



Ty Segall

Twins Drag City
★★★★

Prolific scuzz-rock talent bashes more of 'em out

On his third LP of 2012, the garage-rock prodigy and burgeoning cult hero rearranges *Nuggets* and Nirvana echoes into moderately memorable tunes with scant help from other musicians. He obscures wearily muffled lyric snatches under waterlogged guitar fuzz that builds into a thick wash and varies the formula with hippie-commune harmonies, space-alien dirges, acid-folk jangles – all with a precision that belies his surface amateurism. **CHUCK EDDY**



Michael Jackson

Bad: 25th Anniversary Deluxe Edition Epic/Legacy
★★★★½

The *Thriller* follow-up was badder than you remember

Twenty-five years on, *Bad* sounds less like *Thriller*'s underachieving follow-up than a masterpiece of pure pop. The deep cuts rule, from the clamorous electro-soul of "Speed Demon" to the harrowing "Leave Me Alone," whose thump can't disguise the song's core loneliness. The treat here is the rarities disc, with demos that reveal MJ's creative process – an ingenious mad scientist, live from his lab. **JODY ROSEN**

Rolling Stone

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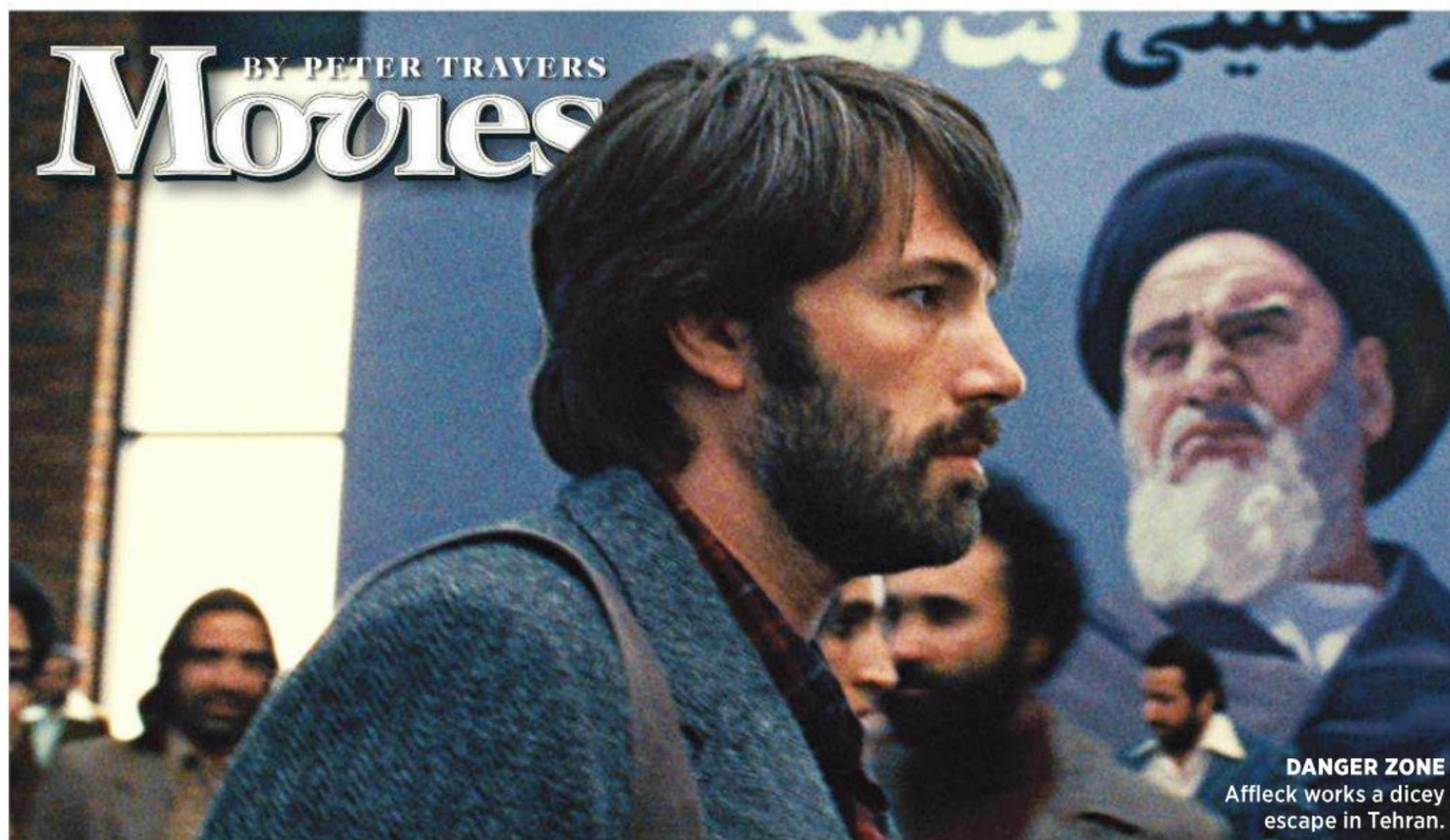


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DANGER ZONE
Affleck works a dicey
escape in Tehran.

Hollywood to the Rescue

Ben Affleck stirs up Oscar buzz by showing how the movies helped six Americans escape Iran

Argo

Ben Affleck, Alan Arkin,
John Goodman, Bryan
Cranston

Directed by Ben Affleck

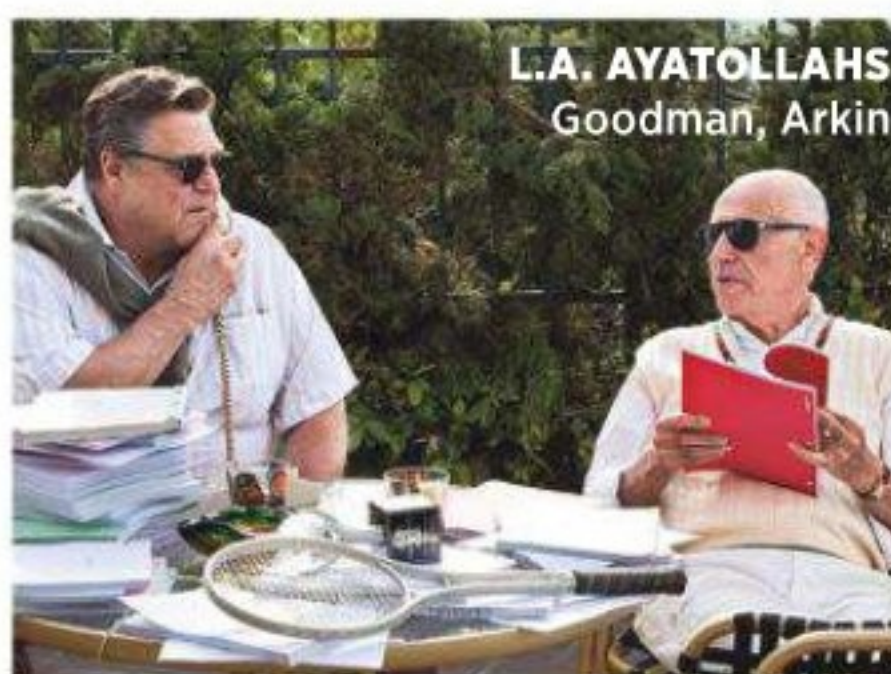
★★★★½

JUST SO WE'RE STRAIGHT, Ben Affleck doesn't merely direct *Argo*, he directs the hell out of it, nailing the quickening pace, the wayward humor, the nerve-frying suspense. Hold off on the sniping. I didn't say Affleck was the next Hitchcock. I'm saying job well done. *Argo* takes Matt Damon's BFF out of his native Boston, where his first two directing jobs were set (*Gone Baby Gone*, *The Town*), and zaps him onto a global stage, namely the 1979 Iran hostage crisis that saw 52 Americans held captive for 444 days. Affleck does himself proud, detailing the attack on the American Embassy in Tehran by Islamic student militants and the plight of six U.S. embassy staffers who escaped but needed help to get out alive. *Argo* is a ferociously exciting thriller. Yes, it's based on fact.

Yes, that's Hollywood code for truth-stretching. But, no, you shouldn't be that worried.

And speaking of Hollywood, that's where the truth of *Argo* becomes stranger than fiction. Top CIA extractor Tony Mendez (Affleck cannily underplays except for a scary Seventies haircut that's the tonsorial equivalent of shag carpeting) enlists the dream factory to get his escapees out of hiding – they're cocooned for nearly three months by Canadian ambassador Ken Taylor (Victor Garber) – and on a plane to safety. Not only does Mendez pose as a Canadian film producer scouting Iran to film a fake sci-fi epic called *Argo*, he must train each of his six charges to persuasively play members of a film crew. Rich satire is mined as Mendez makes the phony *Argo* movie look legit, complete with casting calls, production meetings and posters. He gets help

in L.A. from real-life *Planet of the Apes* makeup artist John Chambers (John Goodman, wonderfully droll) and Lester Siegel (Alan Arkin), a composite of every film producer who ever barked his way to being boss. Arkin is comic perfection, relieving the stress with deliciously cynical line readings.



As the tension mounts, with protesters savagely rocking the van carrying the crew as they drive through the Grand Bazaar (a great sequence), you'll feel nothing but grateful for the Arkin-Goodman shenanigans.

Everything culminates in the film's final third, as Affleck takes the next step in what

looks like a major directing career. There's no doubt he's crafted one of the best movies of the year. Added props to Chris Terrio, whose gathering storm of a script puts the major players in motion: Mendez and his nervous embassy workers speed off for the airport. CIA boss Jack O'Donnell (a superb, soulful Bryan Cranston) sweats out the "best bad idea" the agency could concoct. Chambers and Siegel keep their sham B movie humming in L.A. Only the Canadians, who spearheaded the rescue, get short shrift.

The *Argo* operation stayed top secret until Clinton declassified it in 1997. But given current U.S.-Iran relations, the film practically screams with topicality. Shot by the gifted Rodrigo Prieto (*Brokeback Mountain*), with Istanbul standing in for Tehran, *Argo* has a propulsive energy that sweeps you along. And if the jacked-up climax, with its narrow escapes and a chase down the tarmac, doesn't jibe with pedestrian reality, don't sweat it. That's Hollywood for you.

The Paperboy

Nicole Kidman, Zac Efron

Directed by Lee Daniels

★★½

BORING IT'S NOT. THIS campy Southern trash-wallow is too stupefying for that. Already infamous is the scene in which Nicole Kidman squats down and pees on Zac Efron. Hey, a jellyfish stung him; urine is the best cure. There's no cure for *The Paperboy*, the shamelessly lurid film version of Pete Dexter's 1995 novel. Director Lee Daniels, Oscar-nominated for *Precious*, follows his instincts, no matter how pervy, leaving plot, character and logic to catch up.

The movie, with a script by Dexter himself, has guts. And heaps of atmosphere. You can practically feel the humidity dripping in Lately, Florida, circa 1969, as *Miami Times* reporter Ward Jansen (a live-wire Matthew McConaughey) returns home to investigate the case of Hillary Van Wetter (John Cusack taking creepy to the max), a swamp rat about to be executed for killing a cop. Charlotte Bless (Kidman), a bottle blonde with a jones for guys on death row, thinks Hillary is innocent. Ward's younger brother Jack (a surprisingly vivid Efron), who delivers the local paper published by his and Ward's daddy (Scott Glenn), thinks Charlotte sizzles. He's right. And Kidman, with enough come-on carnality to singe the screen, savors the role like a juicy peach. As Ward and his black partner, Yardley Acheman (David Oyelowo), dig for a crime story that might win them a Pulitzer, kinky secrets spill out all over the place. This hot mess got booed by the snobs at Cannes, but there's no denying its profane energy.

The Sessions

John Hawkes, Helen Hunt

Directed by Ben Lewin

★★★★½

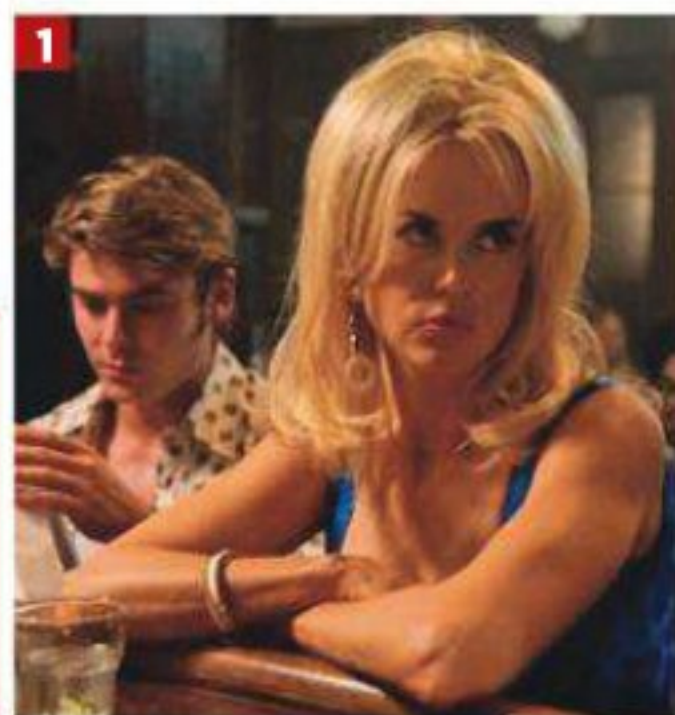
GETTING LAID IS A BITCH for most people. For San Francisco poet and journalist Mark O'Brien (John Hawkes), it's damn near impossible. Since he contracted polio at age six, O'Brien has spent all but a few hours a day in an iron lung. Now, just two years shy of being

a 40-year-old virgin, he decides to see a sex surrogate.

What Hollywood hack makes this stuff up? As it turns out, no one. *The Sessions*, based on O'Brien's experiences while living in Berkeley in 1988, is the stuff of real life. If you're thinking, "How depressing," snap out of it. Writer-director Ben Lewin, drawing on O'Brien's essay "On Seeing a Sex Surrogate" (published in 1990), has crafted an exhilarating gift of a movie that's funny, touching and vital. And Hawkes (*Winter's Bone*, *Deadwood*) does the kind of acting that awards were

umph. Lewin, who also suffered some of the debilitating effects of polio as a child, knows this material from the inside. The sex scenes with O'Brien and surrogate Cheryl Cohen Greene (Helen Hunt) are handled with rare delicacy and blunt, bubbling humor. "Nice shirt," Cheryl tells the painfully vulnerable Mark, as he lies in bed awaiting her first touch. Hunt plays the role full-out, no

(1) Zac Efron, Nicole Kidman in *The Paperboy*. (2) Helen Hunt, John Hawkes in *The Sessions*. (3) Colin Farrell, Christopher Walken, Sam Rockwell in *Seven Psychopaths*.



invented for. Having learned to twist his body, use a mouth stick to dial a phone and type, and suggest the sheer effort it took for O'Brien to simply breathe, Hawkes and his technical virtuosity are astounding. But it's how Hawkes uses his voice and expressive eyes to reveal the inner Mark that makes his performance a tri-

nonsense about her nudity or the intricacies of a job she must reconcile with being a wife and mother. Hunt is spectacular in every way, finding just the right balance between tough and tender. William H. Macy also scores mightily as Father Brendan, the priest who helps O'Brien reconcile sex surrogacy with devout Catholicism

in ways you won't see coming. OK, no more spoilers about *The Sessions*. Just see it. This movie will take a piece out of you.

Seven Psychopaths

Christopher Walken, Colin Farrell, Woody Harrelson

Directed by Martin McDonagh

★★★★

WHAT MOVIE JUNKIE OUT there wouldn't leap at the chance to see merry pranksters such as Christopher Walken, Sam Rockwell and Woody Harrelson go bug-fuck nuts in something called *Seven Psychopaths*? Walken, his line readings a thing of bizarre beauty, is reason enough to sign up. The icing on the cake is Martin McDonagh, the acclaimed Irish playwright who took a winning stab at writing and directing for the screen in 2008's *In Bruges*. Two years ago, Walken made Broadway hum with mirth and menace in McDonagh's *A Behanding in Spokane*.

Now they're back together, with Walken playing a priceless McDonagh creation called Hans, an L.A. con artist who teams up with Billy (Rockwell) to kidnap dogs from wealthy owners and hold them for ransom. Their big mistake is nab-

bong Bonny, a Shih Tzu belonging to Harrelson's Charlie Costello, a gangster with a sadistic streak for anything non-canine. Harrelson is hilarious, especially going goo-goo over Bonny. And Walken and Rockwell have mad skills at, well, everything. Their byplay gets mired by a subplot involving Marty (Colin Farrell), a boozy Irish screenwriter stuck in Hollywood and blocked on his new script. He hasn't written anything but the title, *Seven Psychopaths*. To help, Billy puts out an all-points alert for scum of the earth. Not a bad idea when the great Tom Waits, playing a serial killer, becomes a contender. Blood splatters, heads explode, and McDonagh takes sassy, self-mocking shots at the very notion of being literary in Hollywood. It's crazy-killer fun.

TAYLOR SWIFT

[Cont. from 39] putatively country artist before her. That's why MTV is sacrificing valuable *Teen Mom* airtime to debut her new video in a live segment tonight. But first, she has to endure nine or so taped interviews with various network offshoots. Now in a tight red top and blue pants, she displays such ease with a parade of interrogators – and the random little kids who come by for autographs – that it's not hard to imagine her running for office someday. "Really? I might have to be a college graduate, though," she says. "I guess I better start figuring out my platform."

This ease with glad-handing comes from her father, who, as Borchetta says, "never meets a stranger. You send him into a room, and he'll walk out and go, 'Hey, I just met a guy on the board at Papa John's.' True to form, when I eventually meet Scott Swift – an affable silver-haired guy in a Brooks Brothers-y suit and rimless glasses – he immediately goes for common ground, sharing tales of a brief stint in journalism."

Taylor's maternal grandmother, Marjorie Finlay, was a professional opera singer who sang around the world. "I feel like my karma in life is being in a backstage area or being in front of the house," says Andrea Swift, whose mother died around the time Taylor was signing her record deal. "We were in Nashville when she passed away, and it was a surreal moment, because I knew we were doing what she wanted us to do. There was a kind of passing of the torch."

Swift is convinced she's an exact mix of her parents' personalities – she thinks like her mom but acts like her dad. "My mom is, like, all about the worst-case scenario," she says. "My brother and I call her Central Intelligence Andrea. If you have a headache, she could tell you 15 different things it could be, all of which end in emergency room or death. But she also knows how to throw the best party. She's also really compassionate and kind and disciplined and has a really good head on her shoulders for advice."

Her father is the designated dreamer, though she won't say if her lyric about "a careless man's careful daughter" is autobiographical: "My mom thinks of things in terms of reality and my dad always thinks in terms of daydreams – and, 'How far can we go with this?'" He was the one who envisioned her success: "I never really went there in my mind that all of this was possible. It's just that my dad always did."

As Swift waits for her video debut, racing around the room on a wheeled ottoman, network executives Van Toffler and Amy Doyle show up. Many smiles and hugs ensue. "How huge is that single?" says Toffler, who's wearing jeans and a blazer, his hair slicked back. "It's like the most ginormous thing in history."

"It's the highest female debut in iTunes history," Swift says. "I'm, like, what?"

"And you know," says Toffler, "or I don't know if you do know, but you're going to be closing the VMAs."

"Oh, my God," says Swift. "I'm gonna pass out. What? When were you guys gonna tell me that? Thank you, that's amazing. Now I really do feel like I might pass out." She's happy, but there's a familiar hint of terror in her eyes. *Ohmygod.*

A VIRAL VIDEO CALLED "TAYLOR Swift Can't Believe It" shows Swift winning award after award, acting lottery-winner astonished every time, continually mouthing, "What?" (See Kristen Wiig's brutal Swift impression.) Needless to say, Swift has never seen it. "I really get my feelings hurt when people make fun of me," she says. "I never won anything in school or in sports, and then all of a sudden, I started winning things. People always say, 'Live in the moment' – if you really live in the moment at a big awards show and you win, you freak out!"

"Those are just her mannerisms," says one of Swift's best friends, stylist Ashley Avignone. "She does the same thing if I tell her something on the couch at home."

The morning after the VMAs, we meet for breakfast in Beverly Hills – her security sneaks her through the back of the restaurant. *Us Weekly's* headline for the performance was "Taylor Swift Gets Sexy" – because she wore shorts. "It's a really interesting idea that you wear shorts and all of a sudden it's very edgy," she says. "Which, you know, on the bright side gives you room to grow – I don't have to do too much to shock people."

It's 11 a.m. and she's totally bright-eyed and un-hung-over in her cream-colored blouse and polka-dot pants ("not shorts," she says, "that would be too sexy"). She skipped the afterparties and had sushi with her band instead. When she hears that Lady Gaga tweeted, "Swift is so cute" after her performance, she offers a taste of jaw-drop-awards face: "No way! Are you serious? I need to see that! Thank you for telling me that." She spends three minutes trying again and again to load the tweet on her phone, without success.

It would be easy to watch Swift at those awards shows and conclude that she's a phony – in her terms, a cheerleading captain pretending she still belongs on the bleachers. But if she lacks self-consciousness, that's the idea. "I just don't want to live that way," she says. "I never want to get jaded, because then you get really protective and hard to be around. That's what can happen if you're too aware of people second-guessing every move you make. So I try to be as blissfully unaware of that as possible." She laughs. "Please don't ruin it. I'm living in such a happy little world!"

Swift may just experience life a little more intensely than the rest of us, which

is one reason her songs can hit so hard – along with the ache in her voice, and her instinct for the minor fall and the major lift. Her songs sneak past our emotional defenses because she has so few of them.

Swift has one more thing to do before she leaves L.A. – a performance at a Stand Up to Cancer telethon, broadcast live on more than 20 channels. She has a bunker-buster of a song for the occasion, called "Ronan." Swift's eyes grow wet telling me about it: It's the true story of a not-quite-four-year-old boy who died of cancer, told from the perspective of his mother. (Swift incorporated ideas from the mom's blog, giving co-songwriting credit.) Nearly every line is unbearably upsetting – it makes "Streets of Philadelphia" sound like "Party Rock Anthem." (The lyric that keeps getting me: "It's about to be Halloween/You could be anything you wanted if you were still here.") Andrea – blond, warm-eyed – passes out tissues as Swift rehearses the song at the Shrine Auditorium. I take one.

As showtime approaches, Swift keeps her mind off the song, doing her extensive vocal warm-ups (which, at one point, involve actual meows) and discussing food options for tonight's plane back to Nashville. She's sprawled sideways in a director's chair; her flats have cartoon-cat heads by the toes. "Buffalo tenders? OK! And rigatoni with truffle meat sauce – can I get it with spaghetti, though? Rigatoni makes me feel weird. It's like a wheel, and what's it trying to do? It's like an unfinished ravioli."

Soon, trailed by a small entourage that includes her mom and her stylist, Swift enters the theater's darkness. She stands just offstage, biting her lip, head down, as Alicia Keys sings. In a similar moment before this year's Grammy performance – which earned her a redemptive standing ovation – Swift told herself, "This is either where you prove the people who like you right, or prove the people who hate you right. It's up to you. Put on your banjo and go play."

She un-hunches her shoulders, breathes deep, and walks toward the stage. "Come on baby with me," she sings with exquisite tenderness, over a hushed guitar. "We're gonna fly away from here/You were my best four years."

Swift makes it through the song. But afterward she breaks into a jog toward her trailer, weeping uncontrollably the whole way, smudging her eye makeup into wild streaks. Ten minutes later, when I say goodbye, she hasn't stopped. "I was trying not to cry the whole song," she says, shrugging helplessly.

Some of the event's stagehands were watching Swift from the sidelines, beefy arms folded. Goateed, ankle-tattooed, wallet-chained, they would've looked at home wielding pool cues at Altamont. But they're soon frozen in place, transfixed by Taylor Swift, and by the time she's halfway through "Ronan," I catch one of them silently brushing away a tear. 65

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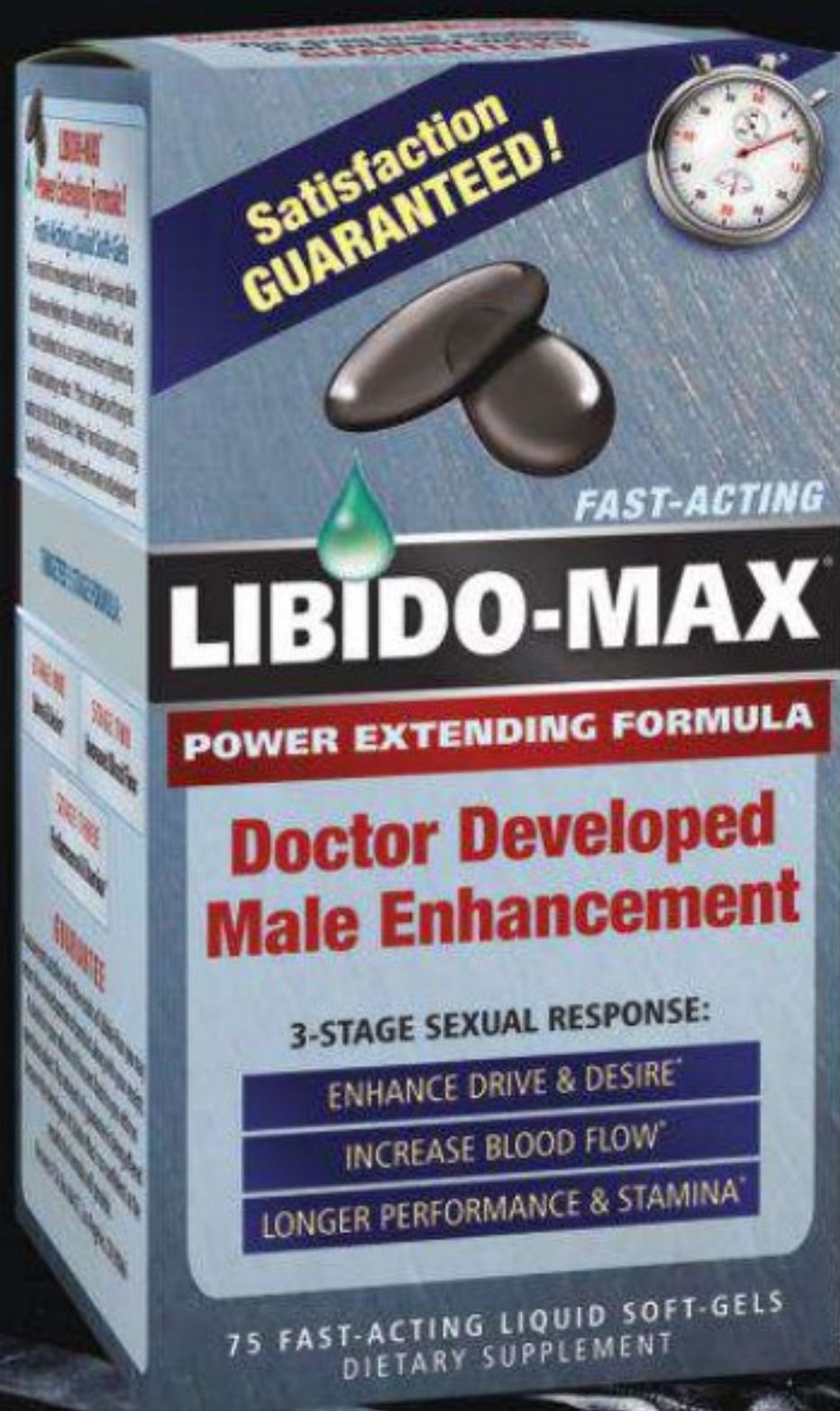
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iTunes TOP 10 SONGS

- Taylor Swift**
"Begin Again" *Big Machine*
- Psy**
"Gangnam Style" *Republic*
- Ke\$ha**
"Die Young" *RCA*
- Maroon 5**
"One More Night" *A&M/Octone*
- Taylor Swift**
"We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together" *Big Machine*
- fun.**
"Some Nights" *Fueled by Ramen*
- Rihanna**
"Diamonds" *Roc-A-Fella/Def Jam*
- Enrique Iglesias**
"Finally Found You" *Universal Republic*
- Alex Care**
"Too Close" *Universal*
- Flo Rida**
"Whistle" *Poe Boy/Atlantic*

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COLLEGE RADIO TOP 10 ALBUMS

- Grizzly Bear**
Shields Warp
- Animal Collective**
Centipede Hz Domino
- The xx**
Coexist Young Turks
- Deerhoof**
Breakup Song Polyvinyl
- Dinosaur Jr.**
I Bet on Sky Jagjaguwar
- Cat Power**
Sun Matador
- Raveonettes**
Observator Vice
- David Byrne and St. Vincent**
Love This Giant 4AD/Everything
- Two Door Cinema Club**
Beacon Glassnote
- The Helio Sequence**
Negotiations Sub Pop

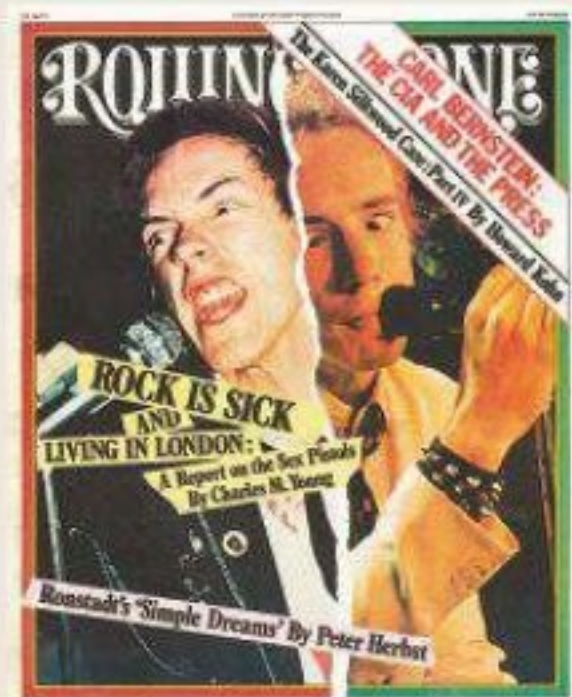
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From the Vault

RS 250, October 20th, 1977

TOP 10 SINGLES

- Debby Boone**
"You Light Up My Life" *Warner/Curb*
- Carly Simon**
"Nobody Does It Better" *Elektra*
- Shaun Cassidy**
"That's Rock 'N' Roll" *Warner/Curb*
- KC & the Sunshine Band**
"Keep It Comin' Love" *T.K.*
- Heatwave**
"Boogie Nights" *Epic*
- Foreigner**
"Cold as Ice" *Atlantic*
- Commodores**
"Brick House" *Motown*
- Donna Summer**
"I Feel Love" *Casablanca*
- Meco**
"Star Wars Theme/Cantina Band" *Millennium*
- Johnny Rivers**
"Swayin' to the Music (Slow Dancin')" *Big Tree*



On the Cover

"The Stones should have quit in 1965. You never see [them] walkin' down the street. If it gets so you can't see us that way, then I don't want it. But the entire American music industry is poised to turn you into the next big thing. They'll suck out any integrity the band has."

—Sid Vicious

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Top 40 Albums

- Mumford & Sons**
Babel Glassnote
- Green Day**
iUno! Reprise
- No Doubt**
Push and Shove Interscope
- 1** **Pink**
The Truth About Love RCA
- NEW** **Lupe Fiasco**
Food & Liquor II: The Great American Rap Album Pt. 1 1st & 15th/Atlantic
- NEW** **Deadmau5**
album title goes here< *Mau5trap*
- 2** **Kanye West Presents G.O.O.D. Music Cruel Summer**
Various Artists *G.O.O.D./Def Jam*
- 4** **Dave Matthews Band**
Away From the World Bama Rags/RCA
- 5** **Little Big Town**
Tornado Capitol Nashville
- 3** **The Killers**
Battle Born Island
- NEW** **As I Lay Dying**
Awakened Metal Blade
- 29** **Mumford & Sons**
Sigh No More Glassnote
- 9** **The Avett Brothers**
The Carpenter American
- 12** **Adele**
21 XL/Columbia
- 17** **The Lumineers**
The Lumineers Dualtone
- 14** **Maroon 5**
Overexposed A&M/Octone
- 8** **Bob Dylan**
Tempest Columbia
- 24** **fun.**
Some Nights Fueled by Ramen
- NEW** **Jake Owen**
Endless Summer (EP) RCA Nashville
- 6** **Carly Rae Jepsen**
Kiss 604/Schoolboy/Interscope
- 16** **Imagine Dragons**
Night Visions Kidinakorner/Interscope
- 20** **One Direction**
Up All Night Syco/Columbia
- 21** **NOW 43**
Various Artists *Universal/EMI/Sony Music*
- 27** **Justin Bieber**
Believe Schoolboy/RBMG/Island
- 22** **2 Chainz**
Based on a T.R.U. Story Def Jam
- NEW** **Alejandro Sanz**
La Musica No Se Toca Universal Music Latino
- 28** **Carrie Underwood**
Blown Away 19/Artista Nashville
- 26** **Luke Bryan**
Tailgates & Tanlines Capitol Nashville
- 19** **Matchbox Twenty**
North Emblem/Atlantic
- 15** **The xx**
Coexist Young Turks
- NEW** **Gerardo Ortiz**
El Primer Ministro Bad Sin/Del
- 7** **Grizzly Bear**
Shields Warp
- 40** **Hunter Hayes**
Hunter Hayes Atlantic Nashville
- 34** **Katy Perry**
Teenage Dream Capitol
- NEW** **WOW Hits 2013**
30 of Today's Top Christian Artists & Hits *Provident/Word-Curb*
- 39** **Eric Church**
Chief EMI Nashville
- 41** **Of Monsters and Men**
My Head Is an Animal Universal Republic
- 38** **Trey Songz**
Chapter V Songbook/Atlantic
- NEW** **John Hiatt**
Mystic Pinball New West
- 11** **Easton Corbin**
All Over the Road Mercury Nashville



Sigh No More

Mumford & Sons scored 2012's biggest first week sales, moving a stunning 600,000 copies. It's the biggest debut for a rock LP since AC/DC in 2008.



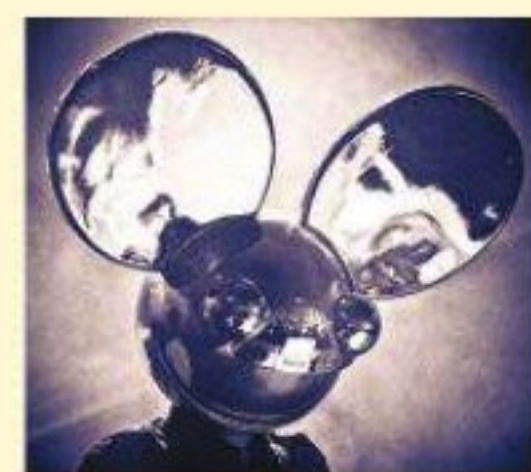
Triple Threat

Green Day cut promo duties short after Billie Joe Armstrong entered rehab, but *iUno!* (*iDos!* and *iTré!* are on the way) still sold 139,000 copies this week.



Tragic Kingdom

Gwen got married, had kids and went solo in the 11 years since No Doubt's last LP. With no hit single, their latest moved only 115,000 copies in Week One.



Mau5 in the Hau5

After two years of heavy touring while EDM blew up, Deadmau5 scored his highest debut ever, selling 58,000 copies – 53 percent more than 2010's *4X4=12*.

00 Chart position on Oct. 3rd, 2012
00 Chart position on Sept. 26th, 2012
NEW New Entry ↑ Greatest Gainer
2ND Re-Entry
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